Marxism Today

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STEVE MUNBY. Bored and Angry: The Politics of Youth Unemployment.

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Marxism Today

Theoretical and Discussion Journal of the Communist Party

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CONTENTS

	Editorial Comments	169
Gordon Robinson	How the Ruling Class Rules..	174
Steve Munby	Bored and Angry: the Politics of Youth Unemployment	183
Georges Marchais	The French Elections and the PCF	191
Review:		
David Green	What Does Red Bologna Mean for Britain?	195
Discussion:		
Ted Slade	Four Years On: The Portuguese Revolution	198

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SOME ARTICLES PLANNED FOR FORTHCOMING ISSUES

Sam Aaronovitch	Eurocommunism
Louis Althusser	The Crisis of Marxism
Martin Rabstein	National Front: Beyond the Pale of British Politics?
Frankie Rickford	The Politics of Feminism
Gideon Ben-Tovim	The Struggle Against Racism: Theoretical Perspectives

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Editorial Comments

CAMBRIDGE ECONOMIC POLICY GROUP

When the latest edition of its Economic Policy Review was published in March, the Cambridge Economic Policy Group created something of a sensation by announcing that if present government policies were continued, unemployment would continue to rise until it reached 5 million by the early 1990s. This is, of course, quite contrary to the impression that Mr. Healey and his supporters would like to convey. The prospect is deeply alarming both for the labour movement and for those who will be looking for jobs in the next decade. Furthermore, it is not obvious why this should happen, since in the 1950s and 1960s orthodox policies were sufficient to ensure what were, by the historical standards of capitalism, very high levels of employment.

The Group's analysis is based on the assumption that Britain's share of the world market for manufacturers will continue to fall. Since 1960 the UK share of world exports of manufactured goods dropped from 16½ per cent to 9¼ per cent and its share of the home market dropped from 87 per cent to 59 per cent. No government policy has so far succeeded in arresting this decline, which is the root cause of the recurring balance of payments crises and the de-industrialisation of the country. What is new about the present situation, however, is the arrival of North Sea oil to rescue the balance of payments. But, in the absence of a positive government policy, the oil exports in the 1980s will not supplement but will to a large extent replace exports of manufactures, whilst any growth that results will suck in imports. The jobs lost in manufacturing as a consequence of a deteriorating competitive position cannot be transferred to the oil industry because production of oil, once the drilling and construction of pipelines are over, is largely a matter of turning a tap and requires only a very small labour force. So the Review forecasts that orthodox policies would generate unemployment of 1.8 million by 1980, 2.9 million by 1985 and 4.7 million by 1990. Living standards for those in employment would continue to rise at a rate similar to that of recent decades, helped by tax cuts made possible by the Government's oil revenue.

This is the all too likely drama of the North Sea bonanza disappearing like a puff of smoke in raised standards of consumption, while the rest of the economy plummets on downwards. The crunch comes, of course, when the oil runs out. One way of protecting British industry is by continuous devaluation of the pound. This would compensate for slow productivity growth by cutting costs in terms of foreign currencies. If successful, it would maintain industrial exports and employment but would significantly reduce living standards (by raising import prices) and cause a shift in distribution from wages to profits to the extent of almost 10 per cent of national income.

This solution is regarded by the Group as unworkable and they strongly advocate a policy of import controls. This would protect living standards and raise demand for British products, thus increasing both output and employment. Faster growth of demand, they argue, would stimulate productivity growth and improve the performance of British industry. Combined with the correct industrial strategy, it would raise manufacturing investment to the levels required to halt the process of de-industrialisation.

The great merits of the Review's analysis are its focus on underlying trends, its concern about unemployment and living standards and its determination to consider a broader range of policies than is regarded as acceptable in ruling circles. Its limitation is the over-simple interpretation of the reasons for the decline of the British economy, relying almost exclusively on the "vicious circle" argument—that slow growth of demand causes slow productivity growth and low investment, and therefore declining competitiveness and continuing slow growth of demand. International differences in rates of productivity growth do show considerable persistence—one need only think of Japan and the United States, for example—and demand forecasts are often based on projections of past trends into the future, so

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that the trends have an inbuilt tendency to persist. But state policy is always striving to break the vicious circle, and has succeeded in a number of cases. This immediately raises the issue of why it has failed in Britain.

Moreover, the increased intensity of international competition and growing integration of the capitalist world mean that investment in Britain is not decided purely on the basis of British demand. The biggest firms tend to consider different West European countries as alternatives to one another for siting investment projects. Finally, whilst the vicious circle argument can explain low investment, it has difficulty in explaining why investment in Britain should generate less output than elsewhere.

The authors of the Review clearly believe that the slow growth of demand is the primary element in the circle, but the evidence tends to suggest that it is structural features of British capitalism which are holding back productivity growth. To confront these requires not just import controls, but a whole alternative economic strategy.

FORD SHOP STEWARDS COUNTER REPORT

In April we published extracts of an interview with Ford Convenors Danny Connor and Bernie Passingham on developments in collective bargaining and industrial democracy at Fords. On April 21 the Ford Motor Company announced profits for 1977 of £246 million, compared with £122 million in 1976, and £14 million in 1975. The company also launched a five year investment programme amounting to £360 million, which was a response to union criticism in the 1977 wage claim that Ford was under-investing.

Simultaneously the shop stewards published a counter report[1] which challenges company claims that the investment programme will greatly strengthen its British operations. The counter report recalls that the 1977 wage claim pointed out that capital expenditure in 1976 amounting to £56 million was, in real terms, three-quarters of the 1974 level and only 40 per cent of the 1970 level. The union's independent advisers, the Phillips and Drew stockbroking firm, had commented:

> "It would be worrying if this position were to continue for several years since the implication would be that the company was failing to maintain its volume of fixed assets and other equipment."

The unions challenged the company as to whether they were "substantially failing to maintain their stock of productive capital". The counter report goes on to throw the £360 million investment programme into perspective, stating that Ford has to invest £320 million over the next five years to maintain its 1976 capacity. Additionally capital expenditure of £234 million in the past five years, 1972-76, when adjusted for inflation comes to around £400 million, depending on the adjustment method used. The counter report comments that "the company's present five year plan for investment is *actually less* than the investment that has already taken place over the last five year period".

Having reached this surprising conclusion the counter report contrasts Ford's aim to increase its share of the British market with its apparent failure to expand production facilities, and expresses concern about a growing level of imports. Already in 1976, 25 per cent of Ford's car sales in Britain were imported. The stewards point out that they are unable to examine other company claims in detail, notably allegations of poor productivity on the part of the British workforce, because they are denied access to the necessary information. Commenting in relation to the 1977 wage claim the counter report says:

> "We had asked for a great deal of information it is true; for example on productivity and efficiency data and other value added details and cost structures, for financial details—investment and research and strategic plans for the future of Ford UK. It was therefore very regrettable that most of the details we sought were not supplied."

Opportunities to hear the company's results and question aspects of company strategy are welcomed, but fall a long way short of what the trade unions are looking for: ". . . a most complete and frank assessment of the company's financial and economic performance and the future development of the company". To this end the document concludes by outlining the contents of a proposal for an agreement with the Company on the procedure for regular disclosure of information.

NATIONAL WOMEN'S LIBERATION CONFERENCE

The record attendance of 3,000 women at the National Women's Liberation Conference

[1] "Trade Union Presentation on Ford's Annual Report 1977", by Bernie Passingham, TGWU Senior Convenor.

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in Birmingham recently showed clearly that the movement is expanding both numerically and also culturally, with the presence of both black and older women. Workshops for women new to the WLM attracted considerable attention. Although the movement's core has remained largely homogeneous in terms of background, class, and age, its ideas have begun to affect the lives of many women outside the movement, notably through campaigns like those on abortion, legislation on sex discrimination, equal pay, and domestic violence.

The women's movement has exposed the extent to which patriarchal values are woven into every level of the social structure, and in doing this has created links between different women's experiences. The workshop structure at the conference was a recognition of the importance of sharing common experiences as women. Rather than choosing between a multitude of workshops on specialised subjects, women were allocated randomly to workshops which were expected to discuss roughly the same themes. These concerned the nature of the movement, its internal organisation, and how its ideas can most effectively impinge on the world outside. It was hoped this would encourage women to retrace the connections between personal experience and the movement as a whole, its campaigns and its structure, to regenerate the self-awareness which has always been fundamental to the WLM. Because of the lack of formal membership and structure, national conferences provide the only opportunity for the movement to assess its policy and direction.

The question "What is the WLM?" inevitably focuses attention on the only, and hardly adequate, statement of the movement's aims, the six demands. Predictably, these came under attack at the plenary session. But what could have been a useful discussion of the nature and function of minimum demands, to whom they should be directed, and whether there should be in addition to them some kind of more detailed manifesto, became a fierce and polarised argument over whether the demands should be abolished altogether. A vocal minority of Revolutionary Feminists attempted to monopolise the discussion with their view that any demand not aimed directly at men was by its nature "reformist" and a danger to the movement.

There have always been differences within the movement. These have often in the past been crudely defined by the left as between radical feminists (anti-men and quite beyond the pale) and socialists (valiantly struggling to lead the movement in a leftwards direction)—a caricature which has allowed the left by and large to regard the WLM either as a diversion or as a breeding-ground for recruits. But the major contribution of feminist theory has been to identify personal experiences as politically relevant, and to recognise the fight for liberation and the fight for socialism as autonomous if related struggles. The structures and organisations of the left themselves reflect patriarchal values, and the ideas of the WLM have important implications for the nature and direction of those organisations.

THE DIFFERENCES

Recognition of this sheds light on the old differences. The polarised positions taken during the plenary session at the conference have emerged from an ongoing debate within the movement which has involved shifts on both sides. The radical feminist tendency first developed in opposition to an orthodox socialist position which reduced sexual divisions to a function of class; they insisted that the primary contradiction within society was between men and women. The last year in particular has seen the growth of the socialist feminist current in the WLM, which, while recognising the need to develop a body of theory which makes links with other political ideas, situates itself firmly within the autonomous women's movement. The interest it has generated within the movement is remarkable: 300 women were expected at the Socialist Feminist conference in Manchester earlier this year, but over a thousand attended. Meanwhile the radical feminist tendency has consolidated into Revolutionary Feminism, with extremist politics which not only identify men as the only "enemy" but see men's behaviour as biologically inevitable. The divisiveness of their politics and tactics which pose a threat not so much to men as to other women in the movement who have anything to do with men, has isolated them from the mass of the movement. At the same time, however, if socialist feminism is to become a hegemonic force in the movement, it must constantly re-assess itself in relation to the feminist aspirations of the movement.

The debate around the proposed 7th demand, on rape and violence against women, illustrates this question. A workshop called

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to formulate an agreed wording and attended almost exclusively by socialist feminists, produced a simple formulation which demanded an end to the use of all forms of intimidation and violence against women. But this proposal was rejected at the plenary in favour of one which situated rape and violence within a sexist society. Although a sentence proposed by the Revolutionary Feminists which attributed male violence to "male supremacy and men's political control of women" was overwhelmingly rejected the consensus was that the question of violence should be linked to "the laws, assumptions and institutions which perpetuate male dominance and men's aggression towards women".

Women's oppression cannot be defined only in terms of class oppression, and a demand on violence against women cannot just be a demand made of the state or of the ruling class. It is also quite explicitly a demand of men—to examine their own practices and attitudes. If links are to be made between the women's movement and the movement for socialism it is vital that socialists should take up these issues, in their personal as well as their political lives, not at some future time when the economic situation is more favourable, but now.

We hope to carry an article in July which explores some aspects of the politics of feminism.

SPANISH CONGRESS

The 9th Congress of the Communist Party of Spain was the first public Congress of the Party for 46 years. This in itself would make it an historic Congress. The fact that it was held is itself a product of the long and arduous struggle which the Party and other democratic parties and forces in Spain, supported by world-wide international solidarity waged over the years in order to finish with Franco fascism and so give the Spanish people the opportunities and political space to debate and discuss their problems and decide for themselves the shape of the future Spain to which they aspire.

How to safeguard the new-won democracy, how to tackle the critical economic situation, how to open up the road to socialism in Spain, what would be the essential features of a socialist Spain, and what kind of Communist Party is needed to face these problems—such were some of the main questions that faced the 1,350 delegates to the Congress representing 201,740 members of the Communist Party of Spain and its affiliated United Socialist Party of Catalonia.

It was a young Congress, with an average age of 35. Over 45 per cent of the delegates had joined in the period 1971 to 1978, a further 32 per cent since 1961—and only 9 per cent before 1939. Nearly 54 per cent were "workers and employees", and 32 per cent from "professional people and cultural forces". Only 179 were women—about 13 per cent.

Certain impressions and conclusions: obvious deep roots which the Party has struck amongst the people; the enormous enthusiasm of the members and supporters for the Party; the large number of capable spokespersons which the Party has, including many young members; the critical way in which the delegates examined the questions before it.

It was a very democratic Congress. Bearing in mind that it is a Party which has only just emerged from 40 years underground, with most of the members very new, it is understandable that some matters were handled in a different fashion from what we are accustomed to. Nevertheless, in commissions on different themes of the main thesis, and in separate meetings at the Congress of delegates from different regions and districts on the main report of Santiago Carrillo (apart from the very lively discussions that took place prior to the Congress), prolonged and hard-hitting debate ensued. In the open sessions of the Congress the procedure followed was that a report of the majority view of each Commission was presented to the delegates by a speaker for that view. In the case of the minority view, only where it obtained 30 per cent of the support in the Commission was it allowed to address Congress. In most cases no minority speaker addressed Congress.

On the policy and strategy of the Party the main lines of the theses followed the now well-known positions of the Spanish Party which they have summed up as "Euro-Communism". The report on the theses was made by the general secretary, Santiago Carrillo. It was eventually voted on, section by section, involving 15 separate votes. Carrillo's report was discussed separately and voted on as well. At the time the vote was taken on the report there were 986 votes cast, 898 of them were for the report, 37 against and 51 abstentions.

Among the main questions debated, both on the report and on the theses, were the

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Moncloa Agreements and the definition of the Party, including the dropping of the phrase "Marxism-Leninism".

The Moncloa Agreements were made last October, when the main political parties reached an understanding about the Government's economic policy, covering wages as well as other steps to deal with Spain's critical economic situation. This Agreement was subsequently accepted by the trade unions as a basis for negotiations. Although the conditions in which the Moncloa Agreements were signed are different from those in Britain today, yet there were some anxieties in Spain that by entering into a contract with the Government in this way the workers were being asked to make sacrifices without the Government fulfilling its side of the Agreement. This anxiety was expressed at the Congress in the form of 41 amendments to that section of the theses of which 36 were accepted.

"MARXISM-LENINISM"

On the question of "Marxism-Leninism", Carrillo emphasised the "need to re-think our strategy, to use the Marxist method to tackle our own reality." Solutions of other epochs, he said, were no answer to the problems of today. "We can't link the thesis of revolutionary crisis with an insurrectionary crisis. Our revolutionary process will be less climactic, even though nothing will be given without struggle. We must deal with what is new. It is not by resting on the past that we shall advance in Spain."

Then, dealing more specifically with the kind of Party they aimed to develop in Spain, he said: "We are going to have a Marxist Party—neither a social-democratic party nor a Stalinist one." Hailing Lenin as "the greatest revolutionary of our epoch", he continued that, nevertheless, 54 years after Lenin's death, developed capitalism in Spain presented new problems which it was necessary for the Spanish Party to study and solve itself. He claimed that the Spanish Party was even more loyal to the method and spirit of Lenin who was able to put aside academic Marxism in order to advance the revolution in Russia.

He pledged that the Party will remain "a class party, a workers' party, a party which aims at a socialist transformation of society and eventually communism, a party of struggle, a party based on the principles of democratic centralism". The Communist Party of Spain, he said, was a national party, firmly rooted in the Spanish people, but at the same time it was a profoundly internationalist party.

Later, in his closing speech to Congress, Carrillo again emphasised the role of Lenin, urging members to "study Lenin more than ever", while reiterating the point that they could no longer accept "Leninism as the Marxism of our epoch" since this approach had led to a dogmatic use of Lenin's ideas and, moreover, tended to convey the idea that the answers to the problems of our time were contained in Lenin, thus holding back the creative Marxist study of the new problems that faced them.

The voting on the thesis dealing with the definition of the Party as a "Marxist, revolutionary and democratic Party", inspired by the ideas of scientific socialism, of Marx and Engels and their method of analysis, evaluating the historic contribution of Lenin and the October Revolution, yet explicitly dropping the "restrictive idea" of "Leninism being the Marxism of our epoch", was carried, with 968 votes cast for the new definition and 248 (mainly from Catalonia) for an amendment which wished to include a reference to Leninism as well as Marxism.

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How the Ruling Class Rules

Gordon Robinson

(The author is a lecturer in politics at Birmingham Polytechnic and a member of the Midlands District Committee of the Communist Party.)

As the discussion around the draft of the *British Road to Socialism*, the debate at the last Congress, and the new version of the party programme all show, there has been an important and significant advance in our thinking about the nature of politics in advanced capitalist societies and the strategic implications which flow from them. Positive though those developments have been, they have not been able yet to overcome the heritage of backwardness which still exists in many areas of our thinking.

It is not perhaps too unjust to say that even now we still have only the most approximate and general idea about decisive aspects of British capitalism. The notes that follow have therefore to be placed in that context and should be seen more as an effort to open up some of the underdeveloped territory in the area of our specific analysis of British politics than to come to any definite conclusions. Such an effort seems to be indispensable if we are to make what Gramsci would have called an accurate reconaissance of the terrain, a reconaissance which must be central to any ambition which wishes to make theory the companion of practice and to turn Marxism into a revolutionary weapon in the hands of our working class movement.

British Marxism and the study of politics

Before we begin, however, it might be worth asking a central question: why is the Marxist study of politics so underdeveloped? That this seems to be the case is hard to contest since we have barely any tradition of study of the Conservative Party, the Liberals, the Ultra-Left, the Far-Right, or even the Labour Party. What tradition there is tends to oscillate between propagandistic simplification and caricature on the one hand and much more serious studies which nevertheless tend to have a historical-narrative focus. In both cases the social and cultural tradition of the political parties, their internal regimes, and the *specific* way they are related to social or class forces are insufficiently developed.

Similarly, there is hardly any Left tradition of in-depth studies of employers' organisations, voluntary associations, or even of such fundamental areas as voting behaviour or the social structures of the political parties. It ought to be noted that we do not even have any practice of studying the social, age, and sexual characteristics of our *own* party.

The reasons for this neglect, which clearly must be overcome, have to be sought within the very nature of the British Labour Movement itself, its historical and present relationship with other classes, its intellectual traditions, and the material and historical forces which have fashioned the recurring interests of Marxist investigation.

Apart from factors of an international character (especially those deriving from the whole history of the Communist movement), Marxism has been most deeply affected by its national situation. There cannot be much doubt, for example, that it has been influenced by the particular intellectual and cultural impact of the bourgeoisie and the heritage which it has left (no Hegel or Croce). In addition, it has been formed by the moral and cultural traditions of British Labour in which, for example, moralistic rejection of capitalism has always been much more influential than a scientific analysis of its nature.

All of this might seem quite obvious but it is worth a comment since clearly many of the gaps which have already been referred to and, as it were, the prejudices of British Marxism arise from a *particular* class movement, set within a given national history, at a certain point of its intellectual, political and cultural development.

Clearly, then, any attempt to reorient the concerns of Marxism, in this case more towards those areas of politics which remain poorly investigated, involves something much more basic than arousing the interest of Marxist theoreticians. Fundamentally what it means is developing a more universally concerned and vigorous Marxism and fusing it with the practices of a Labour Movement which has yet to be won from those abiding practices and attitudes which still erect a barrier to its performing a nationally leading (i.e. hegemonic) and revolutionary transforming function.

A change of this character must also have repercussions on a revolutionary party which, being the carrier and embodiment of a new way of seeing and organising society, cannot afford to have a theoretical heritage which neglects significant areas of everyday life and politics.

Backwardness in theory and backwardness in practice?

Without in any way wishing to underestimate

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either the significance or the effort which has been involved in the implantation of a socialist culture in Britain, it might nevertheless be ventured that the relative sparseness of a Marxist study of politics has had important deforming effects on the way we have judged key questions such as the state, class and political power.

Frequently capitalism has been reduced to an essentially economic phenomenon and in such a way as to pare down the real autonomy of politics, making it little more than a direct and unmediated reflection of class relationships which exist at the point of production. Politics has often been seen as a frothy substance which disguises the "real" capitalism which exists in the economy or the repressive apparatuses. This often "gut" conception of capitalism ("gut" because it is in these areas that militants seem to come into contact with the bourgeoisie in a most concrete way) is frequently wedded to another which sees state power as resting in the coercive and administrative institutions. In this way the problem of the state becomes effectively reduced to a "machine" or a set of interlocking apparatuses. Seeing the state in this way means, in effect, abstracting it from real, concrete class relationships. In addition it leads to ignoring the problem of how state power is particularly related to that set of nationally specific class equilibria of which it is a very special expression.

Needless to say this a great simplification of a set of working conceptions of capitalism which have had a persistent influence in the labour movement. It should be admitted, however, that either singly or in combination such ideas, often lurking just below the surface, have had, and continue to have, a considerable purchase on the most developed sections of the movement with which the party is in living contact.

Since in the world of real activity every conception of politics has its practical consequences, it can be said that that these ways of seeing capitalism have affected the attitudes of the Left, to a greater or lesser extent, in at least four ways.

The first consequence derives directly from the tendency to over-determine the function of the economy and those struggles which go on within it. This is *in no way* to diminish the importance of wages or trade union struggles. It is, however, to say that if *in effect* politics is subordinated to economics (because politics is shadowy and somehow not concrete) then economic struggles *necessarily* assume a greater political dynamising effect than they actually have. Giving too great a priority to the economy in this way makes it extremely difficult to establish a proper balance between it and the politics which go on in the larger society (while not seeing "economics" and "politics" as completely separate categories).

The second, and related, consequence of prioritising the economy in this way is, in effect, to cut the struggles in the factories off from those which take place in the wider society. Often, activists in the factories will either feel that the struggle in the community is diversionary, or that if trade unionists are to be involved it is, as consumers, say, or tenants. In this way the heightened class consciousness which is formed in the factories is dammed up and separated from other forms of class consciousness which exist outside. A consequence of this is to make it much easier for the ruling class to exercise its leadership since by not intervening in these areas the working class can neither appear as, or rehearse the skills necessary for, a nationally leading force capable of overcoming the oppression and exploitation which other dominated groups experience under capitalism.

A third, and crucial consequence, of reducing the effective autonomy of politics, is to diminish or even, in effect, abolish, the real problems which are created by the need to construct alliances. The problem of building a broad alliance against the ruling class becomes infinitely more arduous if the working class is unable to ally itself with other forces on the concrete terrain of politics as it exists in a country like Britain. If it is incapable of linking up with the other social, cultural, sexual and intellectual forces struggling against the bourgeoisie, and if it is in its "guts" convinced that the economic struggle is the sole motor of the fight against capitalism, or even, indeed, *the* torpedo which will cause it to sink, it will never be able to emerge as a revolutionary class. No matter how bitter the economic struggle becomes, if it is unable to generalise itself in politics and to gain a purchase on other social forces over whom the bourgeoisie presently exercises its leadership, it cannot but help subsiding back to the point where it began.

The fourth, and final, consequence is that which is created by the determinant effect which every practical strategy has in terms of increasing the importance of some organisations of class and political struggle and downgrading that of others.

Where there is only a confused idea of the *specific* relationship between economic and political struggles, and where the former always appears more "real" and rewarding than the latter in terms of the gains which can actually be achieved (higher wages, better conditions, better opportunities for organisation etc.), then it should cause little surprise if the organisations created to pursue these objectives (i.e. trade unions) appear as either self-sufficient or at least more worthwhile in terms of the time which is available to workers.

In British factories, therefore, there is a striking lack of organised politics; the Labour Party is not present except through the trade unions which act

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as a very poor surrogate, while the Communist Party as a *party* has only a very limited presence. Unable to create a political organisation which is effectively distinct from the trade union, and whose task it is to transform economic struggles and connect them with all those that can be augmented against the bourgeoisie, revolutionaries and militants cannot but help being drawn backwards and forwards by the spontaneous ebb and flow of the class struggle. The evidence of the past few years show that they become like surf-riders gliding on the surges (1970-1974) or alternatively becalmed awaiting the next "big one" (1974-).

This assessment may seem overly negative, and may be in danger of understating the real changes which have occurred in the level of political consciousness of the working class in the last few years. Be that as it may, the foregoing does indicate that where the Marxist study of politics is underdeveloped (itself related to objective factors) it is not easy to indicate the terrain over which the struggle must proceed nor is it easy to concretely connect up with non-economic struggles or the fight of groups outside the working class. It therefore becomes extremely difficult to transcend levels of struggle which are either self-containing or defensive, relatively minimal tasks judged against the revolutionary ones of transforming society. The insularity of the working class in this country directly raises the question of a theory which can lead to a new practice. Lenin's insight on a revolutionary movement's need for a revolutionary theory could not be more compelling.

Theory and Strategy

If it is possible to isolate any single source of ideological and programmatic renewal it would be in the influence of Gramsci. By now Antonio Gramsci is well on his way to becoming a naturalised citizen of British Marxism and his theses on the nature of political power are sufficiently well known not to need much repeating.

The essential point which he makes in this context is that under conditions of long established bourgeois dominance, as in Britain, the state and the economy, though absolutely crucial to the character of society, are nevertheless only parts of a much more extended and complex system of defence. Such a system seeks to command and survey society in all its aspects and at every level.

The dominance which the ruling class exerts over the state, for example, and the very privileged usage of it which it enjoys, cannot be explained by any simple process of direct control. It is not in that sense, therefore, a "weapon in the hands of the ruling class". The state proper, that is the "machines" of coercion and direction, are specially accessible to the ruling class and function in the way they do because they are, as it were, frozen tight within great ice floes of class alliances which the bourgeoisie has formed around itself. State power in this sense derives from a given class equilibrium which is felt in economic relations, and political, cultural and social life.

The fundamental national leadership which the bourgeoisie exercises, and which is accepted spontaneously by the overwhelming bulk of society, is expressed and retained not only through organisational forms—the state, government, institutions and political parties—but also through culture, habits, intellectual fashions and traditions. It spreads its roots right down to, and is preserved by, the prevailing "common sense" of the age. Contested as it is by an alternative way of seeing and organising society, a way which corresponds to the objective interests of the working class, (a challenge which is still, as has been suggested, relatively weak), the bourgeoisie's hegemony ranges with differing intensity right across the social and sexual spectrum and penetrates the deepest recesses of public and private life.

It is precisely in this area of politics, which concerns such questions as culture, education, the family, intellectual life and voluntary associations, that Gramsci's contribution is so important. Such a dense and resilient system, which is connected to neither the economy or the state in any simple or direct way, does not, Gramsci suggests, collapse under the impact of economic crisis. There is not, therefore, any direct knock-on effect of economic difficulties which are then transmitted with equal intensity in the political arena. However, to accept Gramsci's general description is at the same time to confront the real lack of a Marxist investigation into the channels, linkages and mediations through which *in this country* the bourgeoisie exercises its leadership over this region of political life.

As a contribution to the discussion which has already begun, this article wishes to approach the problem from three angles. The first is the way in which the bourgeoisie historically won its leading role. The second is the nature of the class alliance system upon which it presently rests, while the third is the function of those political parties through which its pre-eminence is expressed and confirmed.

I THE CHARACTERISTICS OF THE FORMATION OF THE BOURGEOISIE'S LEADING ROLE

Gramsci makes the point in his *Prison Notebooks* that a ruling class expresses its leadership in ways that do not necessarily exclude compromises either with its most direct antagonists, or with those social forces which are its allies. Hegemony, therefore, does not need to rest on the outright subjection of a subaltern class but can be, rather, the embodiment

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of a series of long and short-term compromises and equilibria in which the ruling class is most advantaged in terms of arbitration and enforcement.

To put the problem a little more concretely. The bourgeoisie in Britain has for a very long time been able to lead national and political life precisely because of the allegiance which it has been able to win from a whole collection of social forces which might be regarded as providing its most stable basis of support. But it has been able to do this also partly because the working class has been prepared to occupy a subaltern and dominated position, that is, it has been incapable of building its own alliance system upon which a nationally leading function would have to rest.

There are few prizes, however, for describing the working class as a subaltern class, or even designating its main symptoms; economism, trade union consciousness, and apoliticism in the sense of leaving national political questions to those "most qualified to deal with them." The real problem lies elsewhere and consists in defining the *extent* of the working class' subalternity and thereby the degree to which the ruling class exercises its hegemony. Clearly this is by no means an academic question since much in the development of a revolutionary strategy hinges on its correct assessment. Whatever assessment one makes of the compromises which have been struck between the classes, it should be remembered that it has been drawn up as a consequence of *struggle* in which both sides have often been fiercely engaged. It should not be thought that a subaltern class is by any means a tame one.

To describe the formation of the bourgeoisie's hegemony means to confront the problem of class struggle and conflict a little more particularly. There is no country in Western Europe where the victorious class struggle of the bourgeoisie against feudalism was accomplished as early, or as completely, as in Britain. At a much earlier date than elsewhere the feudal legacies of a cosmopolitan and reactionary Church and a conservative anarchistic peasantry were done away with.

This was different from what happened in Germany, say, where a timid bourgeoisie accepted the leadership of the Junkers, or in Italy where ruling groups made up of industrialists and great landlords rotated in uneasy equilibrium. In Britain, certainly by the nineteenth century, the ruling class was much more united and compact than elsewhere. One of the most important consequences of this was that the nascent working class, and indeed all those other forces which pre-dated capitalism or were produced by its further development, were confronted by a ruling class which was well entrenched on the commanding heights of society—the state, government, economy, the political system and, increasingly, mass culture. Thus the relative completeness and extent of the ruling class's hegemony, and the early date of its implantation, may be seen as a key determinant of its history as a ruling group thereafter.

Impressive and singular though this paramountcy was, it should not be forgotten that even at this early date a force which had the *potential* to overthrow this ascendancy was already beginning to take shape. Organised in its trade unions, co-ops, and especially in Chartism, the working class showed what a powerful challenge it could mount. Even though the failure of Chartism showed that no successful threat could yet be posed to the ruling class's legitimate, nationally leading function, it did, nevertheless change the shape of the ever shifting boundary which divides a dominant from a subordinate class. Even at this stage it forced the ruling classes to make a major compromise, to pay, as Chamberlain put it later, a "ransom" which was to be met in terms of important political reforms.

The growth of the ruling class's alliance system

It has already been suggested that a major element of a class's hegemony lies in its capacity to present itself as the "universal" representative of the interests of other groups or classes. Clearly, the ability of the ruling class today to represent its interests as those of the nation lies at the heart of the consent which it is able to engender. The roots of this success go back a long way and it is worth trying to reconstruct, even if schematically, the means whereby the ruling class was able to win this position of spokesman and director of the interests of other forces.

In a certain sense British nineteenth century history can be read as the process whereby the ruling classes constructed what might be called a hegemonic, or ruling bloc. Since such terms need clarification, it might be said that it is made up of a collection of social forces over which and through which the ruling class expresses its leadership. The classes and fractions which compose the bloc are allied to the ruling class in a variety of ways. They are the groups which most completely and freely accept the bourgeoisie's dominant role, or because they have obtained advantageous compromises with it are prepared to see their particular interests subsumed under those of the "national" interests as described above. Through such a bloc, whose construction is vitally related to the special position which the bourgeoisie occupies in the world of material production, the ruling class is able to maintain the legitimacy of its control over property as well as the special access it enjoys to the apparatuses of the state. Furthermore, the general outlines of such an alliance can be traced through the institutions of society, through politics, education, culture, and also private life. Hopefully, what such a formation means

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in politics will be made more concrete below.

Keeping in mind that only the merest outline can be drawn, it might be said that in the nineteenth century the following elements formed the bloc's main components. Firstly, the old landowning aristocracy. Here, even the quickest glance at politics a century ago will show the old aristocracy wielding enormous influence through the Court, the Cabinet, the leadership of the political parties, the armed services, the civil service and the established Church. It took a long time, and many sharp struggles, before the bourgeoisie, which was becoming ever more dominant in production, could colonise these areas. Even parliamentary reform, reform of the civil service and the army, and the emergence of new leaders in the Tory and Liberal parties did not ensure the bourgeoisie's total victory. The consequence of the kind of transformation which these institutions underwent meant that even well into the twentieth century the ruling class had a strong aristocratic flavour.

That the bourgeoisie was able to force a certain disadvantageous compromise on the old aristocracy, was partly brought about by the influence which the bourgeoisie was able to exercise over social forces which had either pre-dated mature capitalism, or which had been brought into existence by it. Among these forces might be found the second and third elements of the ruling class's alliance system—a system, it should be reiterated, which was by no means static, but which was developing all the time.

These were the extensive stratum of artisans and smaller capitalists, and the middle classes. Highly differentiated internally, they nevertheless occupied an important position since unlike either the aristocrat or large manufacturer, they were in living and much more frequent contact with the mass of society, and especially with the working class. As teachers, preachers, small employers or exemplars, they exercised a strong influence on its cultural, intellectual and moral formation. Even though it is too crude to describe them as middle-men, they did, as the experience of the growth of the trade unions, co-ops and Chartism show, have an important effect on the development of working class consciousness.

A further word needs to be added on this point, however. The independent artisans played an ambiguous role. Being in much closer living and working relationship to the working class, they sometimes turned out to be the most radical supporters of its cause. At the same time, and especially as the century proceeded, they and the smaller capitalists came to form an important focus of bourgeois ideology. As the folk-heroes of competitive capitalism, towards whose position men of thrift could aspire, they formed an active link between the working class and the general value-system of the ruling class.

A little bit more also needs saying about the role of the middle classes. Then, as now, they played a very important part in the ruling class's alliance system, though under conditions which were quite different. Comprised of smaller capitalists, of people who enjoyed an economically independent position (unlike large sections of the contemporary middle classes), of members of the free professions in law, education, and the Church (non-conformist as well as established), of cultural elites, middle ranking officers of both the political and state institutions, socially and culturally connected with the large manufacturers, bankers and traders and aristocracy, but also with certain sections of the working class, they represented a very stable medium of social organisation and connection of the bloc as a whole. In addition, in their function of intellectual, cultural and social leaders they formed, and generalised views of the world, part of whose consequence was the legitimation of the bourgeoisie's leading role and its wide spontaneous acceptance in society. A final, though very important point; especially in the intellectual field the middle classes carried out their function in a strongly autonomous way, seeing both "intellectual freedom" and freedom from state constraint as being an essential part both of their cultural heritage and of what they had to offer to society.

The working class and the dominant alliance system

How, then, did the working class relate to this bloc, and what was the balance between antagonism towards, or collaboration with, the bourgeoisie?

Two quite different answers can be given. The first overstates the degree to which the working class was incorporated by the ruling class, while the second, more frequently met on the Left, romanticises a certain "purity" and revolutionary potential. Like Rabelais' *Gargantua*, it appears virtually as a fully grown man at the time of its delivery.

Comparisons with other labour movements might help to clarify some of its nationally specific aspects. Unlike other European countries, where strong revolutionary movements have developed, the element of working class collaboration with the ruling class has generally been stronger than that of fundamental opposition. The reasons for this must be sought in the very nature and extent of the bourgeoisie's hegemony itself. Because of its compactness and the way in which it preceded the development of the working class, it was much more able to exercise a greater influence than elsewhere in Europe. Thus only for a relatively short time, compared with elsewhere, did it take the road of repression.

In addition, at quite an early stage both the infant

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working class and the bourgeoisie struggled for the objective of fuller democratisation against the old aristocracy, so that over the question of parliamentary reform the energies of the working class were vital in imposing that compromise which has already been referred to.

With more specific reference to the dominant alliance system itself, it can be seen that the role played by the middle classes, and the particular contact they had with the working class, helped it both to transmit the dominant value-system into the working class at the same time as its more radical sections were prepared to accede to, or even champion, working class demands in the fields of political and trade union reform, or over questions which concerned the working class's standard of life. Partly in this way the bourgeoisie was able to find specific means of ideologically conditioning the working class, at the same time as the concession of reforms could be carried through in such a way that no fundamental political threat arose to the dominant/subordinate relationship.

Saying this should not, however, hide either the great gains which the working class made, and often through mass struggle, in the fields of self-organisation and reform, or the great potential which a movement like Chartism showed for the possibilities of achieving a complete break with the ruling class. But Chartism *did* fail and it was not replaced by any similar movement. This conditioned a contradictory process which has been felt ever since whereby the working class created its own trade and political organisations, has organised its own culture, and has fought for and gained important reforms, but it has done so within a relationship with the bourgeoisie which has worked to limit that autonomy which is a crucial pre-condition for the assertion of its own hegemony.

II THE PRESENT CLASS BASES OF BOURGEOIS HEGEMONY

It hardly needs saying that since the last century British capitalism has passed through a profound transformation. Its entry into its imperialist and state monopoly phase has had an enormous repercussion on the organisation of society and, as a consequence, on the forms which ruling class dominance has taken. The working class has changed in terms of size, internal differentiation and self-organisation. At the same time, the old middle classes have been decisively re-shaped and have been joined by an extensive stratum of salaried professional and white collar workers. As a consequence the relationship of all of them with the ruling class has changed. Two things, however, have remained constant; the ruling class has retained a workable alliance system upon which its mass consent rests, while the working class, despite the undoubted gains it has made in terms of independent political representation and spreading its influence in society, still labours under a condition of formidable subordinacy.

Bearing in mind that it is exercised in very different international conditions, marked by the crisis of imperialism and the world rise of socialism and national liberation, how is the ruling class's leadership organised today, and upon which social forces does it principally rest?

In broad outline the ruling class bloc seems to have at least three main working elements. Firstly, the ruling class itself; secondly, a very tangled network of mediating social forces which undertake directive tasks in the arenas of production, politics, cultural and social life, and thirdly, important sections of the working class whose allegiance seems to be maintained in a special way.

The ruling class can be said to comprise at least two distinct but functionally overlapping areas. The first is made up of owners of capital whose activity, both now and in the past, has been concerned with the economy. The second is drawn from those groups whose activity and traditions have concerned institutions of rule and dominance outside of the economy. Integrated with the history of British imperialism in a special way, their activity has been mainly situated in the organs of political, juridical, military and administrative command. Though these two areas are not absolutely demarcated they do, nevertheless, represent two different relationships and histories in terms of the ruling class's leadership of society.

Nevertheless, they are both defined by similar class backgrounds, cultures and experiences, have broadly similar internal histories and both rest on similar views of themselves and their own historic role. To them other social classes might appear as allies, friendly neutrals or enemies.

As a stratum they are given homogeneity by their relationship to the means of production or by such horizontal links as family ties, common education or social connection and by the joint celebration of nationally esteemed rites and symbols. They are linked vertically with those social forces over whom their historic command of prestige, property and power has exercised the most intense influence.

Thus the ruling class might be separated into those active in the economy, where big, international finance capital has wielded, and wields, great influence, the remnants of the aristocracy which has reinforced the class by its own history and sense of purpose, and whose links with society in general are by no means totally atrophied (the function of the Monarchy and aristocratic patronage), and those, like the judicial and military elites, which draw off, and feed back in, the prestige which attaches to these institutions.

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The intermediary social forces of the ruling class bloc

Organised around the ruling class, and specially and differentially sensitive to its interests, is its alliance system. Defining both the nature and extent of the ruling class's special influence, and the forces over which it extends, is very difficult. Although much that is of great practical importance hinges around a correct assessment, little more will be attempted here than to make some very general statements about it.

What can be said is that in this network of social forces are to be found those who are most materially advantaged, and whose subjective outlook makes them the most consistent and active supporters of the world outlook and interests of the ruling class. Especially in politics they form the activists of the ruling class parties. They form the most secure political manouevring ground for the ruling classes, and are also the most intense focus and transmitter of its claims to universality and hegemony.

Bearing in mind that the influence of the ruling class is not felt equally in its different parts, the bloc would appear to be composed of at least five distinguishable elements.

1. That section of smaller capitalists which, while it has little or no tradition of access to the state or the executive organs of government, has nevertheless occupied a significant place both in society and the economy. While not, along with farmers, representing the most dynamic or directive centres of capitalism, they do often, however, wield important influence over local culture and politics.

2. The very extensive stratum of independent entrepreneurs; the mini-capitalists with aspirations, generally employing a very small work force, artisans, shopkeepers, and, often, their workers. They still remain an important force since millions of workers are still employed in this sector of the economy and they wield a considerable influence on local culture and political behaviour.

Among these workers the entrepreneurial ethic remains very much alive as does a cultural universe which is particularist, anti-collectivist, and frequently anti-trade union. At the ideological level this stratum of aspiring, hard-working and self-made men exercises considerable influence over those sections of the working class with which it is in most direct contact. It is often celebrated in the dominant ideology, being put forward as that group which most essentially embodies the spirit of capitalism itself.

3. This level contains at least two distinguishable parts which between them make up the professional or salaried intermediary strata. As in the nineteenth century the free professionals in such areas as law, medicine, and high culture figure centrally, though their role has changed enormously. Since then they have been joined by professionals in the fields of engineering and science. Although in the last decade this stratum has felt the influence of trade unionism and the changes in culture which have developed in the universities, they still, on the whole, act as prestigious promoters of the general views of the ruling class.

The second part is made up of that salaried workforce which has been created by the growth of the public and private bureaucratic corporations. As with other sections of the bloc, there are important differentiations, the most important being that in the last decade or so salaried workers have been much influenced by trade union organisation and forms of action. This notwithstanding because managerial, entrepreneurial and hierarchical views still predominate and are fed back into society, they form an important reservoir of support.

4. As can be seen, the intensity of ruling class influence, and its ability to isolate social forces from the attraction of class adversaries, decreases as we move "down" the alliance. It is nevertheless found in this more diluted, though still recognisable form, in certain sections of the working class.

There is an important part of the working class which is un-unionised, which is unwilling or resistant to taking collective forms of activity, which is uninvolved in the para-political activity which sometimes develops in the large plants, and which is generally hostile towards the traditions and objectives of the trade union movement. As such it represents an important ruling class wedge driven into the working class and whose votes contribute much to keeping Labour out of office. But it is not only amongst these sections that the ruling class can find allies. As the British Leyland toolroom dispute showed quite clearly, skilled and organised sections can also be won over, though probably much more temporarily.

5. Finally, the ruling class, through quite particular cultural and social linkages, seems to have a special relationship with women no matter which social class they find themselves in (though class remains a major variable).

The relative isolation and separation of women in the family, the subordinate role they are still expected to play, and the privatisation they suffer, expose them to ruling class influences in a way which is generally not true for men. The fact that women have often been seen as an achilles heel of the working class in industrial disputes and have been mobilised against trade union activity, and that they vote more for the Right than the Left, and at the same time comprise the majority of the electorate, clearly makes them a very important force to have conquered and through which ruling class ideas can penetrate into the deepest recesses of society.

Obviously, presenting the ruling class's alliance system in this way carries with it the danger of

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making it seem a mightier army than it actually is. The boundaries between its constituent parts are not as neat in real life, nor should it be forgotten that areas of the bloc feel the counter-attraction of the working class, or are moved towards it by the very objective processes of capitalist development. It is precisely because the alliance is not totally compact but is an area of struggle and compromise, both between the working class and the bourgeoisie, and between its constituent elements, that politics plays such an important part for the ruling class in terms of offering it leadership and the appropriate forms of brokerage.

III POLITICS AND THE ORGANISATION OF THE RULING CLASS'S ALLIANCE SYSTEM

Since there is a tendency on the Left (reflections of which can still be found in the new BRS) to see parties as the direct mouthpieces of certain classes (*the* party of the ruling class, etc.), a preliminary observation seems necessary. Because a political party is a very special organism whose function it is to direct, or struggle to direct, the life of society and the state, and to achieve a given combination of social forces to that end, it cannot be directly manipulated by a social class, even a hegemonic one. If that was the case capitalists would themselves make up the political leadership, something which they clearly do not.

A similar kind of autonomy is enjoyed by those social forces over whom a ruling class exercises hegemony and which is partly secured through the activities of a political party. The social forces which constitute the mass base of a party like the Conservative Party (the same is also true for Labour), are themselves a focus of pressures and demands which are organised by bodies such as voluntary associations, Churches, trade unions, pressure groups and the media. In this relationship a party acts both as a transmitter and a receptor. The same is true, though in a different way, for a ruling class which doesn't simply hand orders to its political servants, but has to be conscious, through political counsel, of the counter-flow of pressures which are generated in the course of political struggle.

Within these qualifications the ruling class attempts to organise politics towards two main ends. The first is the maintenance of its own dominance while keeping the working class in its subordinate place, as far as possible denying it social allies which could only come by desertions from its own camp. The second, and related objective, is to maintain its leadership over the alliance system, working continually to limit those conflicts which are generated by its disparate and often contradictory nature (small v. big capital, the frustrations of shopkeepers and self-employed caused by the concentration of production and trade, the loss of professional autonomy of sections like doctors, university teachers etc.).

All of this takes place on a historically, and nationally specific terrain; one generally defined as bourgeois democracy. This might be seen as the summation of a specific class struggle (the working class's fight for the suffrage, trade union reform etc., and the ruling class's opposition to it) which has been proceeding since the working class came into existence. It is not a system completely dominated by the bourgeoisie (though it remains hegemonic within it), but reflects, in the practices of the political institutions, the level and nature of mass penetration into them, and the kinds of political organisations which represent the dominant and subordinate classes, the compromises which they have forced on each other through decades of struggle. It has, therefore, an essential quality formed as a consequence of both sides, though with vastly different degrees of self-awareness, seeking to generalise its interests over those of its antagonist.

The Conservative Party as "a ruling class party"

The main political forces representing the interests of the ruling class are the Conservative and Liberal parties, though it is also plain that it has a special relationship with the Labour Party. The first of these might be considered the more proper "party of the faith", as it were. Its leaders are recruited from the dominant class or come to develop and retain an intimate relationship with it, while its functionaries, mass membership and electorate derive from those forces in the alliance which have already been referred to.

While the Conservative Party responds to the interests of the ruling class, and also helps to form and define it, it does so in an autonomous way. Certainly its leading elements, nationally and locally, enter the highest councils of the bourgeoisie and enjoy its confidence, but this in its turn is functional to an even more important role. This is linking the bourgeoisie with its allies, giving them all a sense of purpose and unity, while at the same time giving the alliance system a specific form, linking it with activity in the economy, parliament or government, and the state.

However, because its mass base similarly enjoys a strong element of autonomy, the party, too, feels the effect of demands and conflicts which are generated in this area. Part, therefore, of its role is to arbitrate over such disagreements and work towards the overall unity of forces in the field. It also has the task, then, of giving political expression to those compromises which the ruling class enters into and advising and fighting for what it regards as an acceptable point of equilibrium. In this way it performs an important role of conciliation, main-

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taining, nevertheless, the priority of ruling class options.

As the disputes in the party over the last ten years show, this is not an easy job: firstly, because there does not seem to be sufficient ruling class unanimity around a strategic response to the economic crisis and the Labour movement's reaction to it, and secondly, because elements of the Tory base, disoriented by the economic and political crisis, seem attracted to political solutions which the ruling class still seems cool towards. Thus the party has come to show the tensions both within the bloc and between the ruling class and its mass base. Both the Heath/Walker and Thatcher/Joseph camps, through pursuing different objectives, would seek divergent types of compromise, different aggregates of social forces to bring them about, and would call for different kinds of struggle encased in somewhat different philosophical traditions.

The Labour Party; "a mass party of the working class"?

Since it is our largest and most powerful neighbour, since it has limited the essential autonomy of many of our working class organisations, through a political appropriation of trade unions and many trades councils which have turned them into its "transmission belts", and since it holds the electoral support of the bulk of the working class, the question of the Labour Party assumes special importance for us.

It cannot be said, however, that it has yet been satisfactorily solved. As in so many areas of our theory, a definition of it as "the mass party of the working class" obscures almost as much as it reveals. It is inadequate, firstly, because it tends to mystify the nature of the working class and can only be accepted because our own analysis of the working class is so underdeveloped. Where, for example, is a tradition of analysing the working class outside of the trade unions, or one which gets to grips with the different cultural, social and political levels within it? Where, furthermore, is one which looks at working class political life as a particular relationship to the bourgeoisie, or as a product of a living relationship with those social forces which make up its mass base?

In the absence of an all-round analysis, both the class and its institutions appear as cardboard cut-outs, a background upon which superficial schema are often imposed. Thus, lurking just below much description of the Labour Party there is the notion of the good man (the working class) fallen among thieves whose company he inexplicably finds hard to break with (reformists, "bought off" elements). In this way the essential subordinacy of the class, the *real* material base for reformism, is conjured away and replaced by conspiracy. Thereby the failure of the working class to show much enthusiasm for socialism is explained by continual betrayal.

To be found in the company of this view of the Labour Party is another one, which is that which reduces it essentially to an *institution* within which other *institutions*, that is the trade unions, occupy a special place. What this does is not only to displace the working class as a real force, but makes the main axis for changing the Labour Party run through changing the leadership of these institutions (more Lefts on the General Council, the NEC, Tribune Group etc.). Here again, the manipulations of the ruling class can be combatted by getting the "right men" in.

While this is certainly a crude, perhaps unfair way of describing these policies, they do, nevertheless, distract both action and analysis from the point where it should be concentrated, that is, the way which in everyday politics the bourgeoisie exercises its hegemony over the working class.

Surely, it is here, in the traditional subordinacy of the working class, that the Labour Party has got to be placed, for the policies which have *always* characterised it—reformism, parliamentarism, and the organisation of people's activity and relationship with the state in an essentially passive and electoralist way—are reflections of a concrete and knowable balance between hegemony and subordination.

Might it not be more useful to see the Labour Party as a particular reflection of the processes mentioned above, a party which *in itself* reflects the struggle between dominant and subordinate classes. Also would it not be fruitful to see it as a party divided by the lines of this struggle and, uniquely, enjoying the confidence of both sides (how else could Labour Governments work?). It embodies, that is, the given compromise which has been established between the hegemonic and subordinate class. Ought not the starting-point of an analysis of the Labour Party be found in the particular hegemony of our bourgeoisie, so that it, the strength of reformism, the political frailty of the CP and the weakness of a Marxist tradition can all be logically connected?

Conclusion

Perhaps *here* is the place both for a Marxist analysis and the intervention of a revolutionary party which it should guide. Put like this, the problem of "winning the Labour Party" cannot be left to conspiratorial manipulation of offices. Rather it can only be achieved in mass politics, working amongst the people who form the base of both the Labour and Conservative parties, transforming them and the institutions of the labour movement at the same time. Shifting, that is, the frontiers which divide a dominant from a dominated, class.

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While it is clear, and welcome, that, as the debate around the BRS has shown, party theory is in a much healthier shape than for some time, the gaps that exist in our knowledge of politics are still very considerable. These deficiencies, often made good by only the most approximate notions of the workings of capitalism, seem directly related to a certain primitivism which prevails in some of our activity, especially that tendency which effectively places politics under the wing of economics.

Since the growth of a revolutionary party is vitally bound up with the development of its theory, it must comprehend the real nature of capitalism, especially the way in which the bourgeoisie has put down deep roots which are wrapped around culture, politics, social forces and institutions. And by comprehend is meant detailed, concrete, analysis. The beginning of further wisdom must start from the recognition of our considerable ignorance.

If the working class cannot develop a more heightened awareness of the reality of ruling class power, and if it cannot see how the social forces which support capitalism are actually held in place, then it cannot develop a perspective for breaking capitalism's mass base and putting itself forward as an alternative ruling force. Instead it will continue to vegetate on lower forms of political activity, mistaking shadows for substance.

The defining feature of a revolutionary strategy is how it helps the working class and its allies to take power, and to take it across a specifically defined battlefield. Mature British capitalism will not collapse and be deserted by its ruling classes, nor is it likely to be changed by some benign socialist invasion. Attractive though the thought might be, neither will it be blown away by the fair and freshening winds of Eurocommunism.

Bored and Angry

The Politics of Youth Unemployment

Steve Munby

(*The author is the editor of* Challenge)

One of the most striking developments in Britain over recent years has been the emergence of mass unemployment, with official figures of 1½ million. Of these an extremely high proportion are among youth under 25—roughly 40 per cent of the total, with unemployment levels among 16-25 year olds three times as high as those for older age groups.

The impact of youth unemployment has opened up a major fissure in the existing political framework, with the exclusion and alienation of many young people from our major social and political institutions. This presents both major problems and opportunities for the left. In the past it has proved difficult to develop links between the trade union movement and the unemployed. In a similar, if distinct manner, the labour movement has faced real difficulties in involving young people, generally earning at best a passive allegiance in union membership, or voting. If the left and the labour movement can develop adequate policies in response to youth unemployment, build an effective mass movement around the issue, and are seen to be playing such a role by young people, it could register important advances. The possibility exists of winning young people as a social group to the left, which would have a major impact on the balance of political forces in Britain. For this to be achieved considerably more attention and action needs to be devoted to this issue than previously.

The Youth Dimension

Any assessment of the problem must begin by indicating who the young unemployed are. Public attention has chiefly focused on school-leavers. These are an important group, both in terms of the numbers involved and the rapid growth of unemployment among them, as the table below giving recent unemployment figures for school-leavers indicates:

	1974	*1975*	*1976*	*1977*[1]
	000s	000s	000s	000s
June	5.4	18.4	118.2	142.7
July	14.4	55.3	119.4	241.6
August ..	56.0	158.2	194.5	220.4
September ..	33.4	117.9	142.3	166.2

[1] All statistics here are taken from *Full Employment*, a collection of articles on this area published by the Institute for Workers' Control.

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Widespread concern has been expressed by politicians and the press over the plight of school-leavers. However, this has had only a limited impact on government policy, and at times has tended to obscure the extent to which unemployment reaches far beyond the ranks of school-leavers. More attention has been paid in recent months to the problems of other groups of young people. The catchphrase "socially disadvantaged" has been used to describe the employment and career problems facing such disparate groups as young women, young blacks, and the "educationally disadvantaged" (*sic*). Apart from obscuring discrimination on grounds of sex, colour and class, this label helps to perpetuate a more general mystification of the problem. The seriousness of the problems confronting the different sections of young people referred to above are clear. Nevertheless an approach which attempts to analyse youth unemployment principally in terms of the distinct problems of these different groups, fails to grasp the specifically youth dimension of unemployment in terms of its causes and effects, and the extent to which young people as a whole are affected.

Thus in July 1977, a peak period for unemployment among school-leavers, after the figure for the latter is deducted (241,600), we are still left with 167,000 under 25 on the dole. The most fruitful conception of youth unemployment is of a continuum ranging from 16 to the mid-20s. This embraces all those entering the labour market from different forms of educational institution ranging from school to university, as well as large numbers of young people who have been unable or unwilling to obtain permanent employment.

Certain features are worth indicating. Firstly, despite the smaller number of women registered as unemployed than men in the 16-25 age group (304,000 : 404,000), the ratio of women to men is nearly twice as high as in older age groups.[2] Secondly, the incidence of long periods of unemployment has increased, particularly in the 20-24 age groups (only exceeded by male workers in the 60-64 age group). Finally, it should be noted that the overall figures for youth unemployment exclude some 100,000 kept off the register at any one time by special employment and training schemes.

No Return to the 60s

While the incidence of long-term unemployment is both alarming and increasing, a more striking feature is that the great majority of young people are liable to experience at least short-term periods of unemployment. This has a number of consequences. It means that unemployment has an impact on young people as a whole, not just a distinct section. Therefore it exerts visible effects within their social, political and cultural life. While unemployment does confront young people with economic problems, their character and scale is quite different from the 30s. The politics of youth unemployment aren't rooted in absolute material deprivation. Instead we have a politics of boredom and frustration at blocked opportunities and the contrast between the consumer society and the experience of the dole queue. There is a risk of young people being forced back into an increased dependence on and subordination to the family, state, educational authorities, and employers.

The worst aspect of being unemployed from an immediate point of view, is the boredom, isolation and powerlessness one feels. It can lead to a reduction in expectations, self-confidence and a willingness to take militant economic action. At the same time it can promote a more distinctive youth identity. There are signs that the blocks being placed on young people's opportunities and the threat to their autonomy are provoking something of a backlash. Given their effective exclusion from or impotence in other spheres such as work, politics, the family and education, young people have tended to channel their responses into the area of culture and leisure.[3] Here it has been possible to experience a greater sense of collective identity, enjoy more autonomy, and achieve a bigger impact. Some manifestations of this are of an extremely negative character, e.g. football hooliganism, vandalism, etc. Others, such as the new currents in popular music, are far more positive, with long-term implications both in the cultural arena and the broader field of youth politics. One of the important features of punk rock has been the manner in which it has expressed and channelled these feelings. The new wave has spearheaded a new anti-authoritarian trend in youth culture within which the experience of youth unemployment is a recurrent theme.[4]

Politics and Morality

Despite their lack of "bargaining" power as a social group, the young unemployed exert an

[2] While statistics for unemployment among older women grossly underestimate its scope, the level of unemployment among young women is still significantly high.

[3] For a more detailed theoretical discussion of this area see "Youth in Contemporary Capitalism" by Bob Lentell, in the January 1978 issue of *Marxism Today*.

[4] e.g. Chelsea *Right to Work*, Clash *Career Opportunities* etc.

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impact on the political sphere insofar as the problem is fairly emotionally charged for many people. The major political parties have all recognised this and attempted both to avoid appearing insensitive to the issue, and earn praise, where it can be won, for actual or proposed measures to deal with the problem. Nevertheless within their existing economic and political strategies, it is impossible for the Tory, Liberal and Labour Parties[5] to put forward effective long-term solutions. For all of them it has been necessary to avoid a link being established in popular consciousness between overall economic strategy and youth unemployment.

One effect of this has been to "depoliticise" youth unemployment, projecting it as a "moral" issue, and consequently dissociate it from strategic political debates. The manner in which this has been effected varies from party to party. The Tories have tended to narrow the issue down to one of a "party political point" scoring, as in the Young Conservatives' demonstration at the last Labour Party Conference. Criticisms of the Labour Government's "impotence" and neglect of the young unemployed have not been linked to any clear policy proposals. The Liberals and the Labour Government have been forced to handle the issue more delicately, given their greater accountability. Thus they have implicitly admitted that there's only a limited amount which can be achieved given existing economic policy (or, rather, the existing economic "situation"). Instead, they have attempted to propose and (in the latter's case) implement a number of piecemeal measures. These, while generally useful in themselves, are completely inadequate given the scope of the problem. However, they serve to alleviate public concern and channel debate into the more limited framework of the merits and demerits of particular schemes.

Real difficulties also face the left and the mass popular organisations in tackling the issue. To a certain extent the left has accepted the terms of debate set by the establishment. There has been a tendency to overstress the "moral" aspects of youth unemployment at the expense of its strategic political importance. Within the various alternative economic strategies put forward on the left, the means for creating full employment has sometimes been insufficiently detailed in character. Measures to deal with youth unemployment have often had the character of an afterthought rather than playing a central role in the formation of policy. In the campaigning priorities of the left, while youth unemployment has been recognised as a major issue, it has sometimes been seen as marginal to key areas of struggle and insufficiently located within the overall perspectives for mass struggle. These weaknesses are related to objective factors which impede the development of a more fully formed strategy.

Youth Opportunities Programme

An important aspect of youth unemployment is the threat it poses to training and career opportunities for young people. The recently published Holland Report has led to the implementation by the Manpower Services Commission (MSC) of a massive training scheme aimed at school-leavers, called the Youth Opportunities Programme (YOP). Despite big weaknesses which I shall discuss later, it represents a major advance in official approaches to youth unemployment on a number of levels. The amount of funds provided and the numbers of young people involved, are substantially greater than in previous schemes. The emphasis on training opportunities for those involved reflects a more serious approach than the earlier, effectively cosmetic Job Creation Programme (JCP). Lastly, the administration of the programme by 28 regional committees allows significant opportunities for intervention by progressive forces in the implementation of the scheme. Many on the left and in the labour movement have been critical of the new programme and dubious about participation in the Area Boards which administer it. Previous experience of "responsibility without power" in the JCP has led to an understandable hesitancy in relation to the new scheme. This is mistaken, I believe, given the greater opportunities presented for intervention within the framework of the YOP. However, an interventionist strategy needs to be very clear both as to its objective and about the limits of such an approach.

Education, Training and the NUS

One of the major innovations of the Holland Report was the implicit recognition that all young people should have access to some form of post-school education and/or training. This represents a significant advance in "official" thinking on this subject and has been rapidly seized on by the NUS and other educational unions. Negotiations have been taking place between the NUS and the MSC for the former to obtain rights to represent the young people on the YOP. This would be a positive step in terms of the ability of the NUS to represent and involve young people in the struggle for better educational and training opportunities. In the long-term, it could strengthen moves to a

[5] My references here to the Liberal and Labour Parties are somewhat misleading since I am principally concerned with the Liberal MPs and the Labour Government. Very different approaches are put forward both by sections of the Labour Party, including some MPs, and the Young Liberals.

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broader unity among young people as a whole on these issues.

Problems and Possibilities

However, while real possibilities exist for advance in this area, considerable problems remain. Much uncertainty exists over the character of the new schemes. There is a strong possibility that they are going to rely on "work experience", where jobs are carried out on employers' premises. One of the tasks of NUS and the trade unions will be to attempt to ensure that the schemes really are educational in character rather than simply providing employers with a cheap labour supply.

Any organisation attempting to represent the young people in the YOP schemes must place as its central task their involvement in self-organisation and the development of mass militant struggle around democratic demands. This raises perhaps the most obvious problem involved in an "interventionist" strategy in Government Training Programmes—the risk of political intervention being confined to the committee level rather than the priority being given to mass struggle. Only the future and a careful approach by the left both inside and outside NUS can ensure that the latter rather than the former course is pursued.

Even if these pitfalls are surmounted a strategy that confined itself to questions of education and training and saw the NUS and the YOP as its principal organisational axis would be fundamentally flawed. Even within the age-range to which the new Programme applies, large numbers of unemployed young people will be unaffected, whilst provisions for the 20-24 year olds, who have equal problems, are minimal. Indeed, the problems of the latter could become even more serious, since without the creation of new employment on a massive scale, a new "bottleneck" is likely to arise, when those who have been involved in the YOP finish their course and join others on the dole queue. In this sense the YOP simply ups the age of those most affected by unemployment. Since unemployment among "older" young people is a less emotive issue at present than school-leaver unemployment, it serves a very useful public relations function for the government. To state the obvious, which can be obscured by an overconcern with training opportunities, the central problem in youth unemployment is the lack of jobs for young people. NUS lacks the power on its own to effect a major shift in the job prospects of young people on the YOP. Furthermore, even if a substantial number of the people who go through the Programme are able to find work once they have finished, there is no guarantee that these will be of a kind where they can use and develop the skills they have begun to acquire. Technological change in the service of the giant firms is leading to an increasing reduction in the demand for skills in a widely differing range of spheres of employment. This poses fairly sharply the limitations of the traditional labour movement demand for "improved educational and training opportunities for young people". We need to start asking what kind of work the training is for, and the scope and function of education provided.

The Economics of Youth Unemployment

A major element in the emergence of mass unemployment has been the economic policies pursued by the present right-wing Labour Government. Wage controls have led to a drop in demand for goods, which in turn leads to a drop in demand for labour. Low wages have also led to increased overtime working, which has taken up work which might otherwise have gone to the unemployed. Parallel to this, the savage attacks on the social services arising from cuts in central and local government expenditure have caused a massive loss of jobs.

Within this overall growth of unemployment, specific mechanisms have operated to make young people more susceptible. As already indicated, those new to the labour market are more susceptible to unemployment than those already at work. On top of this, however, specific processes operate which directly discriminate against young people. Thus natural wastage agreements, under which posts left vacant remain unfilled, can blunt the awareness of the threat to jobs by shifting the problem from the immediate workforce to others outside—chiefly young people. Redundancy payments have had a similar effect in taking the edge off the struggle. In a cumulative sense the existence of a large pool of available labour makes it easier for managements to discriminate against certain groups in hiring and firing. While this has been clearly highlighted in terms of racial and sexual discrimination, the extent to which discrimination takes place on grounds of age is less well known. Thus personnel managers in many engineering factories in the North won't employ young single people for unskilled and semi-skilled manual jobs since they are deemed unreliable—more prone to militancy and more likely to change jobs. A rather different device is the use of apprentices as a form of cheap labour, who, when they become eligible for the skilled adult rate, get the chop. Similar devices occur in other areas of employment where young people obtain work for only a limited period of time at lower rates.

The frequently shorter periods of employment which young people "enjoy" in contrast with older groups mean that alongside the higher overall rate of unemployment among young people, far more

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of them as a social group are likely to experience brief spells of unemployment or at least the threat of it. This is increased by frequently different attitudes to unemployment among young people. The combination of higher expectations of what work should offer, the lack of dependents, and the lack of experience of a previous situation of mass unemployment means that young people are more likely to leave a job which they find dull, tiring, and poorly paid. It's a widespread attitude that an unemployed person should take the first job that comes along. For those whose approach to the problem of unemployment is essentially moralistic, it may seem a scandalous admission that young people are prepared to risk unemployment in search of job satisfaction and a decent living standard. I would argue that it is a potentially *positive* attitude among young people insofar as it reflects a reluctance to acquiesce in the economic forces that threaten them.

The Trade Union Movement

Mobilising the trade union movement on the issue of youth unemployment has presented several problems. While general concern has been widespread at all levels of the movement, often cutting across traditional political boundaries, it has proved difficult to translate this into effective action. This requires some examination. For the ultra-left there is no problem involved. It is simply a question of betrayal and capitulation by right and left-wing "bureaucrats" and "reformists". While superficially attractive, this fails to tackle the problem of why there has only been limited engagement at the grass roots with the problem. A more sophisticated explanation in terms of the ideological effects of the social contract and loyalty to the Labour Government, while providing part of the answer, is insufficient: we must look still further. The social contract clearly had an initial effect of lowering the level of struggle on the shop floor. However, in the last year or so, the picture has changed dramatically with a rapid increase in the man hours lost through strike action and unrest on the wages front apparent among widely differing groups of workers. However, the great majority of these struggles have been of a sectional or isolated character. Perhaps the most significant long-term effect of the social contract has been its divisive character, both in the consciousness of the mass of the workers and of trade union leaderships, which has led either to groups "going it alone" as a deliberate policy (as in the case of the toolroom workers) or being left to fight on their own, through the role of the TUC (seamen, firemen, etc.). This climate has tended to encourage a defensive attitude and made it even more difficult to win key sections of the trade union movement to take up the cudgels on behalf of weaker sections such as the unemployed.

Past Problems

However, even given a different political climate on the shop floor, obstacles remain. The organisation of the unemployed and the mobilisation of trade unions on this issue has historically been a problem which the labour movement has found it difficult to tackle. Successful mobilisation has usually been achieved in two kinds of situation. One is where existing jobs are threatened and the actual workforce spearheads the fight to defend jobs in the context of problems facing the local community—the UCS struggle was a classic example of this. The other situation is where direct links exist between employed and unemployed sufficient to forge the basis for unity in struggle. Thus in the 20s and 30s the leadership of the National Unemployed Workers Movement was principally composed of men like Wal Hannington, with a background of involvement in the shop stewards movement and the industrial battles of the earlier periods. This gave both a ready-made "cadre" to the unemployed and strengthened the awareness (and the fear) of unemployment among those in work.

By and large today, however, the most militant and well-organised sections of the trade union movement are least affected by unemployment—e.g., skilled engineering workers and miners. Indeed, in both areas there are sometimes shortages of labour. Consequently the awareness of the problem among key groups is blunted. This makes it a more difficult task to win them to take up the battle against natural wastage and for the 35 hour week etc. A major ideological struggle will be necessary to win the trade union movement, both its traditional "core" and as a whole, to take up the struggle against youth unemployment. This isn't just a question of more "moral" exhortations or putting "correct" demands, but of developing a framework whereby contact can be built between trade unionists and the young unemployed.

The Left Alternative—Problems of Technological Change

A broad degree of consensus has emerged on the left around a counter-crisis programme—widely referred to as the "left alternative". Whilst it represents a clear programme for advance, it needs filling out in more detail, as a strategy for creating full employment.

More attention is required to the effects of the introduction of new technologies and forms of organisation of the labour process. These are linked to the recession and have been accelerated by government policies. Thus the cuts in the social

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services have been marked by a considerable "rationalisation" of work organisation and the workforce.

Until recently the left has failed to tackle the role of technological change as a factor in the employment situation with sufficient thoroughness. The attention given to this question at the recent conference of the Liaison Committee for the Defence of Trade Unions and the STUC, represents a welcome advance in this field. The left's alternative strategy needs to be deepened by incorporating two major approaches to this problem. We must fight to ensure that labour-saving new technologies are used, not to create mass unemployment, but to allow longer holidays, early retirement (where desired), a shorter working week and where possible to reduce the degree of tedium involved in a job. The growing demand for a 35 hour week is a key element in this. We need to use technology as a means of enhancing not degrading the skills of a worker. Secondly, whilst avoiding a Luddite approach, it is important that technological innovation be assessed in terms of its social impact. We need to consider its effect on the number of workers required, the degree of job satisfaction and the usefulness or desirability of the final product, since all three are often intimately linked. Quite often reductions in jobs and skills involved in a particular production process are justified on the basis that the outcome in terms of quality and cost of the final product (i.e. "consumer interests") outweigh the interests of the producers. This frequently doesn't stand up to a careful examination of the final product.

The left must begin to incorporate a more detailed approach to specific areas of employment, which tackles these issues, for its alternative programme really to be able to create full employment.

Building a Movement

The need for deepening the understanding of what is involved applies to the left's approach to the problem of unemployment as a whole. There are further problems in its approach to the position of young people within that. Recognising the differences between today and the 1930s, the Broad Left has rejected the idea of an unemployed workers' movement on the lines of that which existed in the inter-war period, preferring to concentrate on work within the existing trade union movement. This has led to a concentration on struggles within the workplaces. This is of considerable importance, particularly if the struggle against natural wastage and redundancies and for the 35 hour week can develop a mass character. However, it fails to take into account certain specific problems posed by youth unemployment. Older workers on the dole are likely to have had some contact with the labour movement, possess some experience of collective organisation and in some cases maintain union membership. None of these are likely to apply to young people. As a result there is a serious danger of a lack of contact between young people and the labour movement.

The National Front

Alongside the risk of losing a generation of activists to the labour movement is the threat posed by the ultra-right. Despite the relatively crude politics purveyed by the National Front, they have grasped a point which most political forces, including the left, have missed. This is the extent of the political impact of unemployment on a generation of young people. To some degree the NF has developed a more coherent response than either the left or the Establishment to the feelings of frustration, powerlessness and dislocation from society experienced by many young people. While not attempting any campaigning work on the issue of youth unemployment, the NF has been able to use racism as an accessible way of extending their "ideological" influence on the dole queue, using the simple idea that "it's the blacks that are taking our jobs". Alongside this, the stress on organisation—marches, banners, uniforms, etc.—can enable some young people to experience a false sense of "belonging" and "power". This has registered some success. Therefore not only on moral and social grounds, but also in basic self-defence, the trade union movement must attempt to reach out to unemployed young people. The creation of a movement bringing together trade unionists and the young unemployed becomes a central political task for the left.

The Right to Work Campaign

The first attempt to create a movement uniting employed and unemployed was the Right To Work campaign, established in the autumn of 1974 on the initiative of (and as rapidly became apparent, as a "front" for) the International Socialists (now the Socialist Workers Party). Whatever its failings, this was the first body to pose the important question of building unity in struggle between these two sections. It was opposed by many sections of the labour movement, including the Communist Party. Unfortunately despite the very real problems involved in the approach of the Right To Work campaign, opposition was sometimes based on wrong premises. Nevertheless, the RTWC did acquire initially a considerable degree of support both inside and outside the labour movement. Much of this derived from powerful fears of a return to the conditions in the inter-war period—a theme

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constantly stressed by the campaign. Its most frequently used slogan was "No Return to the 30s" often juxtaposed with pictures evoking this image—cloth-capped men on street corners. Much of the activity represented a conscious attempt to recreate the spirit of the pre-war unemployed workers' movement. Thus marches of the unemployed were the main national and frequently local focus of its work. A common criticism thrown at the campaign was that it was attempting to organise the unemployed outside the labour movement. In fact, the opposite was the case. It developed an exclusive orientation towards the trade union movement using the unemployed and other supporters on marches as a kind of moral truncheon to win support inside the labour movement for the demands it advanced. These were very general ("No to the Social Contract", "35 hour week", "End all Overtime"), often unrealisable as *national* demands given the existing situation (e.g., the demand for an end to all overtime) and exclusively orientated towards struggles within the workplace. Indeed, one of its chief failings was precisely its inability to develop any perspectives either for an autonomous role for the unemployed, particularly the young people they aspired to win, or for creating organic links between the trade union movement and the unemployed.

In line with the general politics of the IS, it rejected any notion of an alternative economic strategy. No attempt was made to develop a policy for creating employment at a national level, i.e. government policy. Thus their reactions to government training schemes were confined to denouncing them as cosmetic operations and ignoring the opportunities provided for organising among the young unemployed. Increasingly the RTWC has become an alternative device to the SWP's "Rank and File" groups for mobilising support in the trade unions. Its presence on the dole queues is virtually minimal, confined to periodic "swoops" in the run-up to major events. Nevertheless the deployment of the bulk of the SWP's organisation behind such events has enabled the RTWC to maintain an impression of strength, not reflected in ongoing work on the ground.

The Campaign Against Youth Unemployment

The most important organisation to emerge in the long-term around this issue has been the Campaign Against Youth Unemployment (CAYU): CAYU is concerned to mobilise a wide range of forces, not only young people, around the specific problem of youth unemployment. It was set up at a conference attended by representatives of trade unions and a number of youth organisations, early in 1976. While initially limited in the degree of support it enjoyed, it already possessed important features which represented an advance on previous initiatives on this question. It was orientated specifically towards the problem of youth unemployment. It put forward policies such as an Emergency Training Programme open to all unemployed young people, which could immediately begin to tackle the problem. Finally it recognised the importance of a campaign bringing together the trade union movement and other social forces, particularly among young people.

Within the framework provided by the CAYU, local initiatives began to emerge to give the campaign stronger roots. Thus in the summer of 1976 Liverpool Trades Council Youth Committee proposed a lobby of Parliament for November 3 on the subject of youth unemployment. Subsequently overshadowed by the massive demonstration against the cuts on November 17, the lobby was fairly small involving some 500 people, although reflecting a fairly broad range of social and political forces. However, in the long-term it had a significant effect in stimulating the establishment of local CAYU groups and encouraging activists to initiate ongoing work among young unemployed people themselves.

The approach of CAYU represents a major departure from previous efforts in this area either of campaigns or specific organisations such as NUS. It takes its starting-point from the recognition that youth unemployment is a structural not a cyclical problem. Unless major structural changes are effected in the economy, large-scale youth unemployment will continue to exist. Given the current balance of political forces, this is an unlikely prospect in the short-term. Therefore it is necessary to develop a strategy that can deal with long-term youth unemployment.

Government Schemes

This has a number of aspects. In immediate terms we are confronted by the existing realities of government schemes, in particular the Youth Opportunities Programme. There are two important elements in this. CAYU needs to take up the issues of education and training for young people opened up by the YOP, bringing together those involved with students in Further Education colleges and schools, and raising these issues within the trade union movement. While this is equally a task for the NUS, CAYU can play an important and complementary role at the grass roots in mobilising activity. Work of this character is already under way in several areas in conjunction with student unions in FEs and NUSS around the demand for "parity with the YOP" (i.e. that those in further education should receive similar sums to those on YOP).

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Bringing together large numbers of unemployed young people, the YOP provides real opportunities for the collective organisation of those involved. Given the character of the scheme, this should take the form of dual membership of the NUS and a trade union. The moves afoot for NUS to launch recruitment drives is a welcome step. CAYU will attempt to assist this while also stimulating trade union recruitment. The trade unions could see a welcome re-invigoration of their youth sections through the new perspectives opened up by this project. While recognising the possibilities of positive intervention in the area bodies administering the schemes, this is a task which devolves upon the mass organisations such as NUS and the trade unions. Two major objectives of their representatives on these bodies would be to fight for direct representation of those involved in the schemes and to ensure that their educational and training aspect is real and not a cover for cheap labour.

Organising the Unemployed

It's necessary to respond to the feelings of powerlessness, isolation, frustration and passivity which unemployment can provoke among young people. Particularly, given the fact that the majority of unemployed young people will remain outside the YOP, it is imperative to develop structures within which young unemployed people can begin to organise themselves to deal with the problems that confront them, as well as developing links with other forces.

CAYU is attempting to tackle this in a number of ways. Within its own organisation it aims to develop a membership structure to involve the young unemployed alongside the existing basis of delegates from sponsoring bodies, trade unions, student unions, etc. This is already the practice in a number of local committees. On a broader level CAYU is working to establish drop-in centres where young unemployed people can come together in the day and use as both a social and political base. One has already been established in Leicester by the local CAYU group, and in a number of other areas moves are afoot to open them, either run directly by CAYU or under the auspices of local organisations, ranging from Trades Councils to Youth Action Groups. The establishment of a national network of drop-in centres would represent a major advance in the formation of a local and national identity for young unemployed people and strengthen moves towards alliances with other forces, particularly the labour movement. A great deal of concern exists within the trade union movement about youth unemployment. Assistance in the form of premises, money and bodies to help establish drop-in centres would be a concrete measure which would begin to bridge the gaps that exist.

In the longer-term, I suspect we must consider the question of organising the unemployed within the trade union movement itself. This is being carried out in Italy, where under the auspices of the CGIL a separate union of the unemployed is affiliated to the general federation. A similar structure could be considered in Britain, affiliated to the TUC and given material assistance from other trade unions.

The Labour Movement

A key task of the Campaign Against Youth Unemployment is to win the labour movement to a greater understanding of and involvement in the fight against youth unemployment. This must take place at a number of levels.

It is necessary to win support for an alternative economic strategy with particular reference to youth unemployment, not only at a leadership level, but also at the grass roots. A broad degree of consensus exists among the very different forces involved in CAYU as to the main points such a programme should incorporate. However, in the interests of involving the broadest possible forces, CAYU has refrained from adopting any programme in this sphere. Its chief aim has been to stimulate discussion on the subject of contributing to existing debates, and providing new forums for discussion.

Concretely, local groups are attempting to make demands such as "a reduction of overtime" and the 35 hour week operate in practice by approaches to selected workplaces and industries. A systematic drive against practices which discriminate against young people, such as the use of apprentices as cheap labour, and natural wastage, is needed. To be successful such approaches must be linked to the immediate concerns of trade unionists. Thus CAYU must offer perspectives on the problems facing trade union youth, raising demands such as the adult rate at 18 and for increased apprentice intakes, as part of the overall fight against youth unemployment.

Sectionalism and Alliances

A different level of struggle is that of the role to be played by mass organisations, such as the trade unions and NUS. While both have made some positive contributions to the fight against youth unemployment, there have been significant weaknesses. This can be defined fundamentally as one of sectional responses to the problem. There are two major aspects to this. Both have conceived of the problem in terms of their particular spheres of concern and consequently have had a limited analysis of the problem, which has been

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reflected in policy formation. Secondly, they have failed to place enough emphasis on building a wider unity with other forces, in particular the young unemployed, in the fight against youth unemployment.

There are two principal reasons for this. In the first place their objectives as organisations are limited—relating primarily to the problems facing their membership in the particular spheres within which they operate. In a sense this is both inevitable and necessary. CAYU must respond to this (as indicated earlier) by formulating proposals relating to their specific spheres of work. Secondly, the impact of economic recession and government policies has stimulated sectional responses and led to a reluctance to become involved in disputes over broader issues and on behalf of other groups. I have referred earlier to its effects in the trade union movement, but parallel developments are apparent in the student movement.

Mass unemployment among young people has a sapping effect on the strength of both sections in pursuit of their demands. Both NUS and the trade union movement can both help win support for their own objectives and create the preconditions for unity on other issues by developing alliances with each other and the young unemployed, both in supporting CAYU and at the level of the fight for a change in government policy.

In our new programme, *The British Road to Socialism*, we see the central process in left advance as the development of a broad democratic alliance. The labour movement must play a leading role in this. To win both the necessary unity and a position of leadership, the labour movement must identify with the problems of other groups and take up their struggles in its own right. The creation of a mass movement against youth unemployment could play a major role in this. To achieve this the trade union movement must make more effort to identify with young unemployed people and to lead the struggle on this front. Within the youth movement, the NUS enjoys a unique position as a mass, progressive organisation. It could play a similar role within the youth movement to that played by the trade union movement within the broad democratic alliance.

Rock Against the Dole?

Given the character of much of the previous discussion on the left on this subject, this might seem a suitable ending-point. However, to do so would be to neglect a major question. How do we develop an image that will capture the popular imagination, particularly of young people for the fight against youth unemployment? What are the means whereby this is best communicated? Current presentation of the issue in the press, while frequently emotional in tone, tends to encourage passivity. "No return to the 30s" as a slogan is inappropriate to the situation today, and is particularly weak in pulling-power amongst young people. Unemployed marches have a similar dated feel. Perhaps punk bands like the Clash have come nearest to capturing a contemporary image, capable of "moving the masses", with their emphasis on boredom, frustration, blocked opportunities and wasted creativity. It is from within the arena of contemporary youth culture that such an image must be drawn. As the Anti-Nazi League, Rock Against Racism and the Carnival Against the Nazis have shown, the sphere of music and culture is of crucial significance in mobilising masses of young people on political issues. A major priority for CAYU must be to develop a relationship with and be seen to be part of the progressive trends in youth culture.

The French Elections and the PCF[1]

Georges Marchais

(Below are printed extracts of the report given by Georges Marchais, General Secretary of the French Communist Party [PCF], to a meeting of the Central Committee held at the end of April to discuss the recent French elections. Prior to the meeting of the Central Committee, a major discussion had taken place throughout the French Party. Two prominent Communist intellectuals, Louis Althusser and Jean Elleinstein, also wrote articles in the French paper, Le Monde.)

It is now five weeks since the end of the important battle for the legislative elections. Since March 20, the Political Committee has published, as was its duty, its preliminary analysis and first conclusions.

Our party has once again demonstrated that it is

[1] The text was translated by John Bevan.

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the most democratic party in the country. Since March 20, in every cell, in every section and federation committee, every party member who so wished has been able to express freely his or her point of view, criticisms and suggestions.

Six years of struggle for the Common Programme

Our party has made this programme its central political objective for at least 10 years. In 1968, we decided that one of the reasons why the May-June Movement had not led to more substantial results was the absence of a political option.

Given the conditions that existed in 1972, was it correct to sign the Common Programme? Yes, it was. Nothing could justify a different attitude.

From the moment when a Common Programme of government was on the agenda, we had to include in this Programme consideration of the objectives and means of a political strategy, capable of assuring the success of a governmental experience of the left.

Both the 21st Congress in 1974 and the 22nd Congress in 1976 underlined the need to do everything to consolidate the Union without falling back on any illusory intrinsic virtues of the Common Programme, that is, to get rid of the illusion that victory would come without a blow being struck.

The fight for the victory of the Common Programme

Since the Common Programme of government was signed we Communists have, in effect, had only one line and one objective: to do everything to ensure that the deep democratic reforms defined in the Programme be successfully put into practice.

We are not saying that all our activity has been perfect. But what is certain is that we have indeed followed this line: no error has been committed due to a straying from this line and none that could hinder its success. This is true of the parliamentary elections of 1973 when we, at least, conducted our campaign under the banner of left unity and of the Common Programme.

It is also true of our struggle to present a joint candidate for the Presidential elections of 1974 and of the total, exemplary and unreserved commitment of all Communists to the success of this candidate.

It is also true of the struggle that was necessary in 1974 and 1975 to maintain and strengthen the Union, a struggle which developed right up to our work for the cantonal elections in 1976, the local elections in 1977 and the signing—at our suggestion—of the national agreement.

It is also true of our 22nd Congress, of the form it took, which allowed us to develop and enrich our strategy and thus to make a considerable contribution to the struggle for unity and change.

More recently—during the battle to up-date the Common Programme and the parliamentary election campaign—we have had only two, closely linked, concerns.

Firstly, to bring up to date the Common Programme which was five years old, but without trying to out-bid the other parties or exaggerate the possibilities (*maximalisme*). By this we mean to modify the aspects which had become *outdated* while at the same time taking extreme care not to alter the direction or fundamental provisions.

Secondly, to turn the March 78 elections into a victory for the left and for democratic change.

Is it necessary to recall the decision of the National Conference to carry out the election campaign under the banner of the search for an agreement? To this end we made the maximum concessions possible. Right up to the last day, to the last hour, we suggested to our partners that the discussion should be re-opened to reach the agreement which was so essential for victory.

Up to the last moment we made proposals which would have made it possible, without great difficulty, to arrive at a good compromise if our allies had shown the least bit of goodwill.

To be brief, our party has constantly struggled for a political agreement concerning, as we said, the Programme, the government and also the carrying over of votes [between the two rounds of the elections—trans.]

We were correct in doing this, in doing it right to the end, (i.e. to March 12), and we didn't give up trying to use all means possible to reach agreement.

The Second Round Agreement

We didn't manage it and it was under these circumstances that the ballot took place and that we were faced with the problem of what attitude to take towards the second round.

According to some comrades the agreement of March 13 is, and I quote, "a useless and insufficient agreement". When faced with such ignorance or misunderstanding of the situation, it is necessary to recall the facts as they really are.

On the evening of the first round we reaffirmed our aim of a political agreement concerning the Programme, the government and the carrying over of votes. The following day the Central Committee mandated our delegation to review this proposal with the Socialist Party (PS). But at the same time, when the results of the March 12 became known, the Central Committee discussed the question of whether we should insist on the immediate up-dating of the Common Programme as a condition of agreement if the PS persisted in its refusal. Obviously in this case there would have been no agreement.

The Central Committee therefore decided that, failing an immediate up-dating, we had to obtain a political agreement from the PS which would

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include a number of clear commitments and which would not mean any back-tracking by us.

The main reason why the Central Committee took this position was the feeling that the results of March 12 [i.e. first round—trans], in so far as they failed to give the PS the free hand it anticipated or enabled it to lay down the law to us, would lead the PS to advance and conclude an acceptable agreement and also the idea that the results of March 12 would provide a basis for the party, beyond our expectations in September, to ensure the respect for the commitments we had made.

The agreement which we signed (on March 13) did indeed include certain elements of progress from the PS. This is the case for some important social measures which were explicitly planned in the agreement and which the PS had previously rejected. This is the case, for example, in the *unambiguous decision* that any left government that emerged would contain Communist ministers who would have equal rights and duties with their partners.

Also included in this agreement was the commitment by the PS that—if the left won—the PS would work effectively from the base which had been created to up-date the Common Programme.

For our part, while acknowledging this commitment, we did not back-track on any of our positions.

I recall that at that time the choice was between this agreement or no agreement at all.

From 1972 to 1978 our clear and constant line was unwavering loyalty to the Common Programme and the struggle for its success. It must be noted that this is not true of the PS.

Attitude of the Socialist Party

Now, it is the real, known and undeniable practice of the PS which matters and which proves that it has returned towards social-democracy. This is what we have quite correctly termed a "veering to the right".

The refusal of the PS to seek closer collaboration between Communist and Socialist parties in southern Europe and the headlong move towards the SPD together with the adoption of a common "European programme" with the Socialist and Social-Democrat parties have a clear meaning. They confirm and are an integral part of the "veering to the right". The PS has worked daily to remove the mobilising quality of the Common Programme by *eliminating* its real transforming content.

The September 22 "Summit"

In the discussion which has just taken place, some comrades have reproached our party's leadership for offering insufficient concessions on September 22 [The date of the "summit" between the PCF and the PS—trans.] To be able to say this, they must have forgotten the extent of the PS's back-sliding.

Now, in practice, what would it have meant to give in to the PS?

Quite simply, it would have meant giving in on the minimum wage, giving in on an immediate rise in purchasing power, giving in on moves towards greater egalitarianism, giving in on the measures to be taken to reduce unemployment, giving in on the obligation to employ young people when they finish their training, giving in on the reduction of the working week and on a fifth week of paid holidays as priority measures, giving in on the reforms of real estate, giving in on the effective nationalisation of banking and finance and of the nine groups as planned in 1972, giving in on the wealth and capital taxes. . . .

Also, to have given in on September 22 would have meant giving in on the basic question of a national defence system, capable of guaranteeing the security and independence of France.

It was unthinkable to accept all this as it would have . . . imposed enormous handicaps on the ability of a left government to bring about the transformations which had been proposed in the Common Programme.

So today we can clearly see what the PS strategy has been over the last six years. This is what François Mitterand explained to the Socialist International when he justified the agreement with us by promising to push aside and reduce the influence of our party.

When the PS thought it was strong enough, it moved away from the Common Programme, so far away as to abandon even its 1972 commitments; all this to guarantee itself a dominant position by reducing us to a powerless supporting role, to guarantee their coming to power to form a government whose policy could only be to follow in the footsteps of the right.

Evaluations and Lessons

As to the suggestion that we had so little will that we were defeated, that we took so little action that we created an obstacle to the success [of the Common Programme—trans.] and the transformation which the country needs, that we lacked loyalty to the Common Programme and damaged the Union, to all this we reply, "no", categorically, "no". In this respect we have no responsibility at all. The Political Committee expressed this point of view on March 20, maintains it now, and the discussion within our party has confirmed it.

As I have just shown, our party has in fact carried out alone the struggle to win our people over to the solutions of the Common Programme and to make sure that it succeeds. The main aim, the project of the Giscardian right, is to form a new coalition which would include all or part of the present parliamentary majority and the non-communist left.

The PS has deliberately made this possible and

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encouraged it. So we were forced to carry out the battle on two fronts during this electoral campaign: on one hand, to do everything possible against the right, and on the other to halt the slide of the PS towards social-democracy.

Our strategy is not to make the party the instrument for setting up a system of alternating governments as in Britain or West Germany in which we would only lose ourselves.

The suggestion that we should have given in, have been content to struggle *after* the victory, is equally valueless. Having failed before the election, we don't see how we could manage to come to an agreement with the PS, on the question of its commitments, any better after the elections, when the conditions would be infinitely more in their favour.

Equally it is necessary to follow this reasoning through to its conclusion; if we had given in we would have compromised ourselves in the same way as the PS in discarding the Common Programme. No, all this is obviously absurd.

Faced with this double problem, we have struggled towards one sole goal; to create the conditions for both electoral victory and effective, real transformations.

It was purely the determination of the PS to follow the social-democrat line of capitulation and its refusal to create the conditions for a mutually satisfactory agreement that led to defeat.

Today the PS has completely abandoned the Common Programme, denounced it openly as a straitjacket and is searching for an alternative way to attain its goals.

Six years experience has shown that the PS did not really change at its conference at Epinay [in 1972—trans.]. Underneath a leftist and unificatory phraseology to win over many people who believed sincerely in Union and change, it remains a social-democrat party which does not seek a real democratic transformation.

The originality of our project is also a factor to be taken into account: originality in the sense that it has yet to be seen in any other country; originality also in the sense that in fact we began to define this project in the sixties and we made it more precise and developed it further at our 22nd Congress, which took place in February 1976, two years before the elections.

When the stakes are so high, two years is a short period. When we say this it is not because we want, as can be read in the press, to pretend that this was the only possible way but, on the contrary, to point out that our party had dropped behind—particularly after 1956—in up-dating its political theory.

Socialist Countries

Another important feature is the situation and evolution at the moment in the socialist countries.

We will never renounce or back-track on international solidarity with the Communist parties in the Socialist countries and in non-socialist countries alike.

There are divergences of opinion between us and the Communist parties in the Socialist countries concerning basic questions, such as democracy. We must point out, with regret, that things have not got better, but worse, since our 22nd Congress.

Despite all that we have said, our opponents have been able to exploit this situation in the recent battle.

Our Party has become stronger through six years of struggle

The left has advanced, gained ground. This is true for our party. It is true that in the parliamentary elections we lost 0.7 per cent [compared with the 1973 elections—trans.] but gained 800,000 votes and 13 MPs.

At the same time we have advanced the policy of our party, its capacity for analysis and mobilisation, its organisation, while reaching 632,000 members, i.e. our highest membership since the Liberation.

The PS decided to abandon the Common Programme. It has taken a heavy responsibility on itself. We must recognise this. But for us things are clear: *we are still firmly attached to the idea of the Union of the Left*: we still think it is essential for successfully transforming society and it remains the *core* of our strategy. *And we remain firmly attached to the contents of the Common Programme.* We consider its essential guide-lines to be the only ones capable of getting the country out of the crisis —as its objectives are possible and correspond to the deep aspirations of the working class, the men and women of the country. In short, our aim remains, unequivocally, the Union of the Left for democratic change.

It is obvious to everyone that the abandonment of the Common Programme by the PS and its political actions create a new situation.

Having said that, the battle we have recently lived through leads us to believe that above all we must create a wider and deeper Union through daily struggle, through the vast popular movement which is needed to bring about democratic transformation.

This unity will take many and widely different forms and we will handle it with flexibility and courage. The fact is that this Union was achieved in 1972 around the Common Programme at a time when the PS had been noticeably weakened. The fact is that this Union was put into doubt by the PS itself as soon as it thought it had obtained sufficient results in its publicly declared aim of readjusting the balance of forces within the left. The conclusion that the workers must draw from all this is quite clear:

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the existence and solidity of the Union and its victory are closely linked with the recent significant increase in the influence of the Communist Party.

Discussion in the Party

Some comrades would like to see the creation, within the party and its press, of a kind of permanent discussion on everything and anything. We will certainly not do this for two closely connected reasons. Firstly, it would detract from the leadership structures at all levels (structures which are democratically elected in secret ballots), their function and their responsibility in putting into action the policy decided democratically by Congress.

We will not let, even for expediency, the role and responsibility of this leadership, from the Branch to the Political Committee, be weakened.

To be greatly concerned with the democratic life of the party is one thing. To take a party to bits for some vague petty-bourgeois anarchism is another.

After all it is clear to all clear-thinking people that permanent discussion is only paralysis of decision and action. We are a democratic party not a debating society.

Having said this, we must clarify things: the Communist party is a revolutionary party, a vanguard party and there are tendencies towards the cult of spontaneity, anarchistic tendencies to which we would give in at the peril of losing our vanguard nature.

As it has been presented, we would deny the idea that there is a distinction between internal democracy and public debate. To this suggestion we have just one inevitable reply: the Communist party and society are two different things which we in no way wish to confuse.

The Communist party does not want to reproduce within itself present-day society and its structures, no more than we wish to impose our structures upon society as a whole. The PCF is the combat weapon of the vanguard of the working class and its allies and has chosen the structures and rules which best give its combat a maximum of efficiency.

Review:

What does Red Bologna mean for Britain?

David Green

(The author is the secretary of the Rectory branch of the Communist Party in the East London borough of Hackney. He has edited and written two Communist pamphlets on Hackney in the last two years and is active in local politics in the borough.)

Red Bologna[1] is an exciting, well-written book about a beautiful, vibrant Italian city, its people and politics. It is an important book because—for the first time in English—we are being given a detailed, accurate, accessible account of the work of the Italian left at local level in a city whose administration and politics have attracted international attention. Bologna—pioneer in preserving its historic city centre, renowned for good administration, progressing amidst the chaos and corruption of Christian Democrat-ruled Italy. Prince of the story is the Italian Communist Party (PCI)—the main workers' party in Italy, which has done so much to bring new thinking and new political practice both to Italian society and to the international Communist movement.

Since 1945 the Bologna City Council has been led by the Communist Party. In the most recent municipal elections the Communist Party won over 50 per cent of the total vote cast. In the context of the heightened public interest in both Eurocommunism and in community politics, *Red Bologna* is a mine of information and ideas. The book, and the reality it portrays, excite and inspire. It also raises in a plain spoken and practical way a number of important issues which face socialists and revolutionaries in the advanced capitalist countries. These issues of political strategy stem from the concern of the authors, the people of Bologna, and the Italian workers' parties for social advance and the creation of a better society and life for all citizens today—as well as in the promised land of tomorrow. The purpose of this article is to examine these issues—the relationship of democracy and class struggle, the importance of the local state, the notion of revolution as a process—as presented both in the book and in Britain today.

[1] *Red Bologna,* Jaggi, Müller and Schmid.

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Democracy and Class Struggle

The many-sided relationship between class struggle and democracy is vividly illustrated in *Red Bologna*. Strikes and industrial actions over social and political issues as well as for better wages and conditions; the extension of local control over planning; revolutionary attitudes to education; mass involvement in health care, traffic policy, politics, etc., are vividly documented. One particularly clear example of how class struggle and the fight for democracy are entwined is given by the experience of the workers in Co-operative Operara Fornaciai (Workers Co-operative of Brickworkers). This co-operative is the most important building materials producer in Bologna. In 1920 the employees of the brickworks founded the co-op after the first owners had shut down the business and let the factory. In 1926 the fascist governor of Bologna deposed the elected management by decree and replaced it with a new fascist director. In 1932 the resistance of the workers forced the resignation of the first fascist director. Despite increased fascist agitation against the firm, the workers held firm against Mussolini and not one co-op member ever became a member of the Italian Fascist Party. In the years of the anti-fascist resistance, the brickworkers went on strike for higher wages, and many resistance fighters found shelter in Fornaciai's grounds. A worker in the co-op since the early 1940s puts it: "Whoever knows the history of this time will understand us when we speak of the democratic struggle today."

This workers' co-op was created and tested in the class struggle—it was never a diversion. Today, the workers continue and enrich their tradition by practising workplace democracy, taking decisions about the firm at workplace meetings, and joining in the actions of Bologna's and Italy's workers for improved social and living conditions. The full involvement of workers in their own organisations —whether unions, co-operative, party or community, has strengthened their ability to struggle.

Bologna's Communist-Socialist city council clearly recognises this and has, since 1945, practised a policy of extending democracy. For example, the project of *decentramento*—making direct participation possible for an increasing number of citizens, without discrimination—has been extended to the point where all important plans—development, traffic, retail, etc.—are submitted to neighbourhood assemblies and discussed, altered, and interpreted by tens of thousands of citizens. There is no doubt that these extended democratic rights increase the Bolognese willingness to struggle, as exemplified by strikes to force employers to pay a levy for nurseries. The book lives with illustrations of the role of the people in decision-making and the mass interest and action aroused.

This is a big contrast to the dominant political practice in the many areas of Britain controlled by the Labour Party. In our country we have large Co-ops., strong trade union organisations, and a big Labour Party—but the general picture, outside the well-organised workplace, is one of working class alienation and non-involvement in politics—rather than one of vibrant, combative struggle. Of course there are exceptions, but who can deny that the hearts of many working class towns under Labour control have been destroyed and communities uprooted without any consultation whatsoever. In Britain, public participation in planning is generally a farce. The idea, for example, that local people should be consulted and make decisions about the implications of firms moving, is novel in most British cities—in fact, all too often, even the workers in the firms directly concerned only find out after the move is decided. The overall result of this bureaucratic, managerial approach to working class politics has been that working class ability to struggle has been consistently undermined.

Revolution is a Process

> "The passage from the bourgeois state to the socialist state . . . is characterised by the political struggle of the masses and of their organising instruments (the political party or parties), a struggle in which the solution to existing problems is offered by the introduction of elements of socialism." (Donald Sassoon in the introduction to *Red Bologna*.)

The idea that revolution is a process—not a cataclysmic act—and that revolutionary strategy must be adapted to this reality has gained wide currency in recent years. In Britain this is clearly reflected in the new programme of the Communist Party, *The British Road to Socialism*, which describes itself as a "long term strategy for a socialist revolution in Britain". *Red Bologna* shows how this fundamental idea—and the strategy that stems from it—is actually working out in one European city. A most striking example is education, an arena in which British local authorities have a big say. In Italy, the state education system is an under-financed mess. The Bolognese have responded to this situation by both agitating for the necessary national political changes to tackle this, and by improving the system in Bologna itself. The Communists—in the leadership of this struggle—have fought to win direct material gains in education and to revolutionise attitudes to learning itself. So, in Bologna, additional afternoon schools are organised—where 40 per cent of

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elementary school children take extra lessons from council employed teachers after their lessons with the state employed teachers. Parents' Unions are fought for and encouraged. In 1975, 77 per cent of the Bolognese children had pre-school education. Bologna's "Educational February" has become well-known as an international forum for debate on improvements in education. Class struggle is reflected in the classrooms and the aims of Bologna's educators are summed up by this statement: "The type of young person we need is one who has learned to understand, who knows how to change things, and who wants to change them. Whether it is considered seemly or not, that person is a young revolutionary." (*The Reconstruction of the Primary Schools*, Bologna Education Department, 1973.)

"Elements of socialism" are clearly being introduced into the education system and this is in strong contrast to the British situation where despite material advances and comprehensive secondary education, ruling class ideology dominates the schools.

This critical idea—that revolution is a process—is central to the strategy of the PCI. From this flows a serious attitude to achieving reforms and defending past gains as seen in the schools, at work, in all areas of society. Of course, this concern with practical reforms—elements of socialism—is understood by some to amount to no more than reformism. The PCI itself is careful to guard against this.

> "In the government of regions and cities we must struggle against a tendency which, though never prevalent in our ranks, could well develop. This is the belief, for instance, that it would be possible to give a definite solution to the problems facing the local communities without taking into account the national context. This would be plain reformism." (Armando Cossutta, PCI Regional and Local Government Section.)

So, despite the fact that the PCI has led Bologna Council for over 30 years, the Communist Mayor, Renato Zanagheri, when asked who rules in Bologna, replies "the Christian Democrats", who, he points out, rule the country, control the banks, the economic system, the radio and television.

In Britain, we have much to learn from this approach. The majority in the labour movement practise a form of technocratic reformism—Fabianism—which is not truly democratic. This practice is exemplified in the continual refrain, "Vote Labour and we will do this *for you*." This reformist practice has become increasingly ineffective in achieving significant reforms in the last few years—we live in an age of cuts, high unemployment and cash limits.

The fundamental reformism of the overwhelming majority in the Labour Party emerges most clearly at local level when Labour is "in power". Even though activists and councillors may be "left" on national questions, they carry out right-wing policies in the councils. The implications of this for British politics are only now being evaluated. For the revolutionary minority to grow we must develop an effective new practice which both wins political reforms while not being "bought off".

This means dropping the propagandist attitude to politics held by many. Many Communist Party branches, for example, as organisations are purely concerned with inner-Party meetings, distribution of leaflets and occasional sales of the *Morning Star*—rather than acting as local revolutionary organisations deeply involved in local struggles. Many Communists work only as trades unionists or in other labour movement and left organisations. Alone, this too is an inadequate political practice—sidestepping the problem of developing revolutionary thinking and organisation amongst the working class and people.

The Role of the Communist Party and the Structure of Local Democracy

Red Bologna documents local democracy at work in every major sphere of life. The importance of people having a say in decisions concerning their own lives radiates through the book. However, an area which the book tantalisingly skirts around is that of how the Communist Party—obviously an organisation of primary importance in Bologna—works democratically in the neighbourhoods, in the planning processes, in the struggles for better care and independence for the elderly, etc. The introduction at the beginning, and the fascinating interview with the Communist Mayor at the end of the book, deal mainly with national questions, electoral politics, the controversy on reformism and how Bologna's left administration has weathered attacks from the right wing Central Government. The ways in which local organisations of the Party function, how committees are selected, how ordinary Communists put into practice their roles as revolutionaries, the industrial democracy enjoyed by the City Council's own employees, are not documented. Nor is there a summary of the powers of Bologna's City Council. These are not so much failings in the book as an indication of how interest can be aroused in what to many British political readers is a tedious topic—local government and politics. In Britain, where the Communist Party leads not one council we are short of experience in these vital areas. Even so, more could be done to popularise the problems and

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struggles of Communist and left Labour councillors and to develop appropriate local strategies within a national framework.

The situation of Bologna and that in many of Britain's cities have similarities—but also very big differences. The PCI is the mass workers' party of Italy—in Britain, Labour is the mass party. The difference between masses of workers being revolutionaries and having only a small percentage of workers as revolutionaries cannot be overstressed. British and Italian local authorities have very different powers. The development of democratic rights and the state have been very different. Despite these and other differences, there are many ways in which we can learn from *Red Bologna*.

Perspectives in Britain

There is a new development of interest in local community action and politics in Britain—well documented and analysed by Alan Booth (*Marxism Today*, April 1978). This has been paralleled in Britain by the struggle for increased industrial democracy, which features in the actions of the car workers, for instance, as well as in the resolutions of the Communist Party, trade union and other labour movement organisations. *Red Bologna* highlights the importance of the revolutionary party being actively and practically concerned with all aspects of social life. This concern grows from the mass support and participation in the Italian Communist Party and in turn contributes to the growth of the Party's influence. In Britain, our efforts must be seriously devoted to developing a mass party with such an approach. This concept is at the heart of *The British Road to Socialism* where we propose a strategy for socialism based on democratic involvement, mass struggle, political and social alliance, and the creation of a powerful Communist Party. To develop such policies and such a party, is, like revolution itself, a process, and there are no magic formulae which achieve instant success. A key is the ability to define priorities and then act on them. High on our list of priorities must be the development of local party work. There is obviously a real interest amongst Communists in this work, as Paul Corrigan's article on Coventry (*Marxism Today*, February 1978) and the recent Communist publications on Birmingham, Lambeth, Hackney, Glasgow, the North West and others show. This type of publication and the experiences of Communists in real life need to be built upon. It is here that *Red Bologna* is such a source of inspiration. To be democratic, specific, involved in struggle, clearly uniting, clued up on the local and national power structure is what is needed.

We must work to broaden out the very concept of what is political—making a more incisive analysis of local power structures and problems and acting appropriately. We must work to make our Communist branches collective revolutionary organisations involved with the struggles of the people.

To grow, a small party must act on its defined priorities. A transformation in the Communist attitude to local politics is getting under way—it has a long way to go. Reading and reflecting on *Red Bologna* will help us along the way.

Discussion:

Four Years On: The Portuguese Revolution

Ted Slade

Paul Fauvet has done a valuable job in opening up a discussion on Portugal in the columns of *Marxism Today* ("Four Years On: the Portuguese Revolution", MT April 1978). As he says, serious analysis is long overdue, although we would all be helped in this task if there existed at least one comprehensive English-language study of the crucial years 1974-75.

Fauvet's article presents an admirable outline of the course of events in those years, and poses some key questions. For my part I would like to deal with three themes. First, the class constituents of the anti-fascist, anti-monopolist alliance. Second, relations between the Communist and Socialist parties. And third, the behaviour of the MFA-left in late 1974 and early 1975. In dealing briefly with these three aspects of Portuguese politics, I want also to relate them to a single and most important theme, the breakdown of the popular alliance which led directly to the withdrawal of the popular support

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from the MFA and to the ruptures of the summer of 1975.

Fauvet's formulation of the political crisis faced by the left in those months is summarised in a single paragraph (p. 102):

> "Thanks to the right-wing's incompetent and precipitate actions," he says, "substantial sections of the state apparatus fell into the hands of the left. But this happened before a stable alliance of classes and social forces had been built which could provide a solid foundation for a new state power. The real story of the dramatic months of 1975 is of the left's failure to build such an alliance and of the right's ability to mobilise significant strata of the population against the Revolution."

What strikes me about this formulation is that it needs turning around. After April 25th 1974 (and even before, for that matter), there did in fact exist a broad alliance of classes and political forces that was definitely anti-fascist and significantly anti-monopolist. It was a fragile and patchy alliance but it existed, and with careful treatment it could have been persuaded to support the establishment of a transitional state, in which a substantial non-capitalist economic sector and a wide range of popular democratic institutions co-existed with an extensive non-monopoly capitalist sector and more or less recognisable institutions of bourgeois democracy. Such a state (not unlike what now exists!), implicit in the Programme of the MFA and in analyses made by the PCP both before and after April 25th 1974, would be, to paraphrase the PCP, a state from which the road to socialism could be opened. The question then becomes: if such an alliance existed, what caused it to break down so disastrously?

A crucial factor for consideration in seeking answers to that question must be the social structure upon which the alliance had to be supported.

Portugal is a country of sharp social contrasts. The rift between the conservative North of a Catholic dominated peasantry, and the revolutionary South of the great latifundia and the communist-led rural proletariat, is already so familiar as to be almost a cliché. But there exist other divisions, equally deep, equally loaded with potential conflict, and equally difficult to reconcile with the building of a broad and progressive mass movement (not to mention a *revolutionary* one).

There is, for instance, the contrast between the urban concentrations of the two main cities and industrial centres, Lisbon in the South, and Oporto in the North, and the dispersed population of the rest of the country. Even the two cities themselves harbour deep-rooted political, religious and commercial rivalries.

Then there are the three contrasting classes, the working class, the petty bourgeoisie, and the peasantry, none of them numerically insignificant. Again, within the working class itself, there are enormous differences in levels of political consciousness and organisation between the advanced workers in agriculture and heavy industry, and the vast proportion of workers dispersed around the country in small factories, shops, offices, and farms.

On another level, there are the vast differences in education and literacy, and in access to the mass media. Even in the main cities this leaves large sections of the population, particularly the older generations, to the tender mercies of at worst rumour and gossip, and at best the explanations and persuasions of whoever happens to be at hand to interpret events.

The potential for mischief presented by contrasts such as these is easy enough to see, and from the beginning the extreme right has taken its opportunities.

Indeed, the facility with which the fascist regime could exploit the divisions and ignorance of the nation played a central role in keeping it in power for so long. The problem for the left was equally clear: to advance against fascism and the monopolies, to introduce far reaching political, social and economic changes, whilst holding together a patchwork alliance whose principal threads were relief that the African wars were ending, and that the lead weight of fascism had been lifted from the backs of the people.

In such a situation it was incumbent upon the left to pay constant attention to the effects of its words and deeds upon the cohesion of this alliance. To reconcile the demands of the strongest and most advanced sections with the fears and hesitations of the most backward, to satisfy the one while carefully leading the other forward, was a task requiring the most delicate of handling.

Obviously there were very many reasons why in 1974-75 the attempt broke down, but here I will suggest just two.

Paul Fauvet in his article mentions the size of the PCP and of the Socialist Party as at April 25th 1974, the one a couple of thousand hardened militants, the other "two streets of Lisbon lawyers".

Neither had any tradition or significant experience of sustained mass organisation in an open society. On the other hand, in the last years of the regime they had co-operated in building the semi-legal opposition movement, the CDE, which after April 25th they jointly agreed to transform into MDP-CDE, or "Portuguese Democratic Movement". Here was the basis of a broad popular front which could have formed the political reflection of the diverse social alliance.

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Yet somewhere along the line both the main left parties chose to ignore this potential, and promptly set forth on massive recruiting drives which produced, in a matter of months, two gigantic and amorphous parties, each claiming to be *the* party of the working-class. As a result, both suffered enormous problems of organisation and discipline, which while undoubtedly hitting the PS more severely that it did the PCP, presented both leaderships with massive headaches.

An intense rivalry developed between the two great parties as they competed to occupy the same political ground, a rivalry which descended from genuine, if sharply expressed, political differences at the top, to the most banal sectarianism among the thousands of new recruits. Particularly in the case of the PS this process was aggravated by a combination of blatant individual opportunism and public conflicts between divergent tendencies, which in the end has handed the party over to one of the most politically immoral social-democratic leaderships that we have seen for some considerable number of years.

Having set out on this course it was almost inevitable that the two parties would collide, which at last they did over the question of Intersindical and the single trade-union centre. As Paul Fauvet has already suggested, the PCP, by its insistence on establishing the hegemony of Intersindical *by law*, must take a great part of the blame for this disastrous clash, and for the subsequent ease with which suspicions could be aroused regarding the party's long term ambitions.

It is not my intention to apportion blame without deeper analysis. I simply wish to suggest that the conduct of the two parties, in apparently putting their own growth before that of the mass movement, contributed from the very outset to the subsequent ruptures, not only between themselves, but throughout the whole delicate anti-fascist alliance. It did so because it set up an artificial rivalry between individuals and groups who should have been united.

It added significantly to the opportunities for trouble-making available to the extreme right and the ultra-left. And it heightened the fears of the more vacillant sections of Portuguese society, particularly the petty-bourgeoisie and the peasantry, but also important sections of the working class, and raised the spectre of the political chaos of the First Republic, which led directly to the installation of Salazar's fascism.

The other major factor contributing to the breakdown of the popular alliance must undoubtedly be seen as the conduct of the MFA-left.

After the crisis of July 1974, when the then Colonel Vasco Gonçalves succeeded Palma Carlos as Prime Minister, the MFA could clearly be seen to increase its grip on political power, in obvious breach of the spirit of its own Programme.

Yet divisions between the various individuals and factions, and between them and the civilian parties, were clearly visible even in the autumn of 1974. Otelo Saraiva de Carvalho was the worst, but not the only one whose loose remarks drove a scythe through the mass movement.

In March 1975 the scythe became a sabre. After the triumphant defeat of the Spínolist coup on March 11th, when surely the potential for healing the wounds could not have been greater, the MFA-left formed the Council of the Revolution, a totally military body, and declared itself to be in absolute political control. Next the civilian parties were shotgunned into signing a Pact with the MFA restricting their freedom of manoeuvre in the Constituent Assembly to be elected.

Finally, in a blatant appeal to the masses over the heads of the parties, the MFA urged voters to leave their ballot papers blank, confidently predicting that 40 per cent would do so and thereby give their military saviours a literally *carte blanche* endorsement of their seizure of power.

When the voters failed to respond to the appeal, and instead cast an overwhelming majority of votes for the Socialist Party, with the Popular Democratic Party running a good second, the MFA declared, first, that the result shouldn't be taken too seriously as the electorate didn't know what it was doing, and secondly that the result was "a vote for socialism". This last statement they promptly re-interpreted as a vote for socialist revolution, which it clearly was not, whatever else it was.

By the time the MFA published its own Constitutional proposals, outlining a structure of "popular power", and by-passing the work of the elected Constituent Assembly, the popular alliance was in shreds and the way was wide open for a right-wing coach and horses.

Seen in this light the PCP's continued support of the Gonçalves faction seems inexplicable.

At the risk of appearing an ally of the right and of the Portuguese Socialist Party, I have to say that in my opinion the call for the military to "return to the barracks" seems to have been entirely justified. This implies neither destroying the progressive character of the military leadership, nor the democratic changes that were being won in the military hierarchy. It is simply to say that the correct place of the military in that situation was alongside the civilian forces, and subordinate to the civilian political power. Faced with such a call from the Communist Party *and* from the Socialist Party, it is difficult to see what the MFA could have done but comply.

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